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FALL 1997

A LITERARY BI-ANNUAL OF THE WHOLE ART

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COVER: *Marionette* by Marwan, Oil on Canvas, 162x130 cm, 1980.

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ADRIENNE RICH

LETTER TO JANE ALEXANDER

July 3 1997

Jane Alexander, Chair
The National Endowment for the Arts
1100 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington DC 20506

Dear Jane Alexander,

I just spoke with a young man from your office, who informed me that I had been chosen to be one of twelve recipients of the National Medal for the Arts at a ceremony at the White House in the fall. I told him at once that I could not accept such an award from President Clinton or this White House because the very meaning of art, as I understand it, is incompatible with the cynical politics of this administration. I want to clarify to you what I meant by my refusal.

Anyone familiar with my work from the early Sixties on knows that I believe in art's social presence—as breaker of official silences, as voice for those whose voices are disregarded, and as a human birthright. In my lifetime I have seen the space for the arts opened by movements for social justice, the power of art to break despair. Over the past two decades I have witnessed the increasingly brutal impact of racial and economic injustice in our country.

There is no simple formula for the relationship of art to justice. But I do know that art—in my own case the art of poetry—means nothing if it simply decorates the dinner-table of power which holds it hostage. The radical disparities of wealth and power in America are widening at a devastating rate. A President cannot meaningfully honor certain token artists while the people at large are so dishonored.

I know you have been engaged in a serious and disheartening struggle to save government funding for the arts, against those whose fear and suspicion of art is nakedly repressive. In the end, I don't think we can separate art from overall human dignity and hope. My concern for my country is inextricable from my concerns as an artist. I could not participate in a ritual which would feel so hypocritical to me.

Sincerely,

cc: President Clinton

Adrienne Rich

ADRIENNE RICH

TWO POEMS

1941

In the heart of pain where mind is broken
and consumed by body, I sit like you
on the rocky shore (like you, not with you)

A windmill shudders, great blades cleave the air
and corn is ground
for a peasant century's bread and fear of hunger
(like that, but not like that)

Pewter sails drive down green water
barges shoulder fallowing fields
(Like then, not then)

If upstairs in the mill sunrise fell low and thin
on the pierced sleep of children hidden in straw
where the mauled hen had thrashed itself away

if some lost their heads and ran

if some were dragged

if some lived and grew old remembering
how the place by itself was not evil
had water, spiders, a cat

if anyone asked me–
How did you get here anyway?

Are you the amateur of drought? the collector
of rains? are you poetry's inadmissible
untimely messenger?

By what right?
In whose name?
Do you

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LETTERS TO A YOUNG POET

1

Your photograph won't do you justice
those wetted anthill mounds won't let you focus

    that lens on the wetlands
    five swans chanting overhead

distract your thirst for closure
and quick escape

2

Let me turn you around in your frozen nightgown and say
one word to you: *ineluctable*

—meaning, you won't get quit
of this: the worst of the new news

history running back and forth
panic in the labyrinth

—I will not touch you further:
your choice to freeze or not

to say, you and I are caught in
a laboratory without a science

3

Would it gladden you to think
poetry could purely

take its place beneath lightning sheets
or fogdrip live its own life

screamed-at, howled down
by a torn bowel of dripping names

—composers visit Terezin, filmmakers Sarajevo
Cabrini Green or Edenwald Houses

  ineluctable

if a woman as vivid as any artist
can fling any day herself from the 14th floor

would it relieve you to decide *Poetry*
doesn't make this happen?

4

From the edges of your own distraction turn
the cloth-weave up, its undersea-fold venous

with sorrow's wash and suck, pull and release,
  annihilating rush

to and fro, fabric of caves, the onset of your fear
kicking away their lush and slippery flora nurseried
  in liquid glass

trying to stand fast in rootsuck, in distraction,
trying to wade this
undertow of utter repetition

Look: with all my fear I'm here with you, trying what it
means, to stand fast; what it means to move

5

Beneaped. Rowboat, pirogue, caught between the lowest
and highest tides of spring. Beneaped. Befallen,
becalmed, benighted, yes, begotten.
—*Be*—infernal prefix of the actionless.
—*Be*—as in Sit, Stand, Lie, Obey.
The dog's awful desire that takes his brain
and lays it at the bootheel.

You can be like this forever—*Be*
as without movement.

6

But this is how
I come, anyway, pushing up from below
my head wrapped in a chequered scarf a lanterned
helmet on this head
pushing up out of the ore
this sheeted face this lanterned head facing the seep
of death
my lips having swum through silt
clearly pronouncing
Hello and farewell

Who, anyway, wants to know
this pale mouth, this stick
of crimson lipsalve Who my
dragqueen's vocal chords my bitter beat
my overshoulder backglance flung
at the great strophes and antistrophes
my chant my ululation my bilharzia
my dysentery my hilarious throat

my penal colony's birdstarved ledge my face downtown
in films by Sappho and Artaud?

Everyone. For a moment.

7

It's not the déjà-vu that kills
it's the foreseeing
the head that speaks from the crater

I wanted to go somewhere
the brain had not yet gone
I wanted not to be
there so alone.

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TIMOTHY LIU

THREE POEMS

BIG BOY

where polka dots mask a mastiff's bullet-ridden hide
rote prayer that sinecure we temp to pass the time
in scenes unfit for viewing love freed from its script

no time to search for trump cards vanity plays in vain
where ankles dangle high above those sure calamities
now breaking in that ghetto on stiletto heels we strut

chain of fools lip-synched by a retard cross-dressed
as aretha sporting pumps and platinum chains to adorn
tarred and feathered folds of flesh for town parades

as ski lifts avalanche into the mind's unshingled calm
fear not the shots on kodak paper boys jack-off upon
ass meat spread in centerfolds a canine wrenches free

GLIMPSED THROUGH SPEEDING GLASS

zipped-up in duffel bags some newborn twins
mistaken for kittens mewling in subzero weather
miles from the nearest town inconsequential
where pistol shots ricochet off iron doors
St. John the Divine or a human hair stretched
tight inside a hygrothermograph monitoring air
that consumes a ready-made the future taken
hostage as each man tests his own chameleon
appetite in rivers made of flesh that undulate
on a marble floor our waking life but a fragment
of the dream where fishhooks catch in throats
where children plant a thousand pines more
lasting than these lines some gas jets flaming
out at the county morgue my eyes looking over
a commuter's shoulder an obituary cast off
on a vacant seat in that daily rush devoured
without sustenance the hours now slipping past

NOSTALGIA

The weight of summer fruit in a gilded frame.
Or heads cast down to jars of anthurium.
Nothing like crystal kissed by random nicks.
Forgotten rhythms of salt and blood as rawhide gives.
The glass demanding that your face be seen.
Be made an example of.
Against his hirsute wrist a song we cannot sing.
Those fists that congregate at the site.
Nor gather at Waterloo while Napoleon comes and goes.
Iron rails where a fall should have been.
Some valentines torn open after a sudden rain.

TESSA JOSEPH

WALKING AROUND THE RUIN

There are no more movers No more
filing in and out No packing in layers of wax

Start with the housefire

that jerked its leg in your throat Start with that

saltstained river which was both enough
and not enough to move you That door

open on a kitchen, burning oil you could smell

Start with the houses you've wanted that you haven't had

Their smokeshriveled doors Heatbucking floorboards
Ghosts of windows where windows are gone

A crowd on a green and dripping barge We were in
[procession

Through the buoyed stones Of our slate walkway Our
[blue front door

There was a stone mantel. We always kept things on the
[stairs.

Two feet Slap the water One instant Perfect

There were twenty five windows
We paid for them
Paid for them Put them there

Not like eyes Not like anything
but windows
Like quarries, spiked deep No

There were twenty five windows
A shelf of little boxes
We filled them Or not I saw

it happen I saw each box hinge
on flame

Small archaeology, this cellar: tins of morphine tool-hung
[wall

ancient chessgame What remains

And the details, tiny pictures, curving voices map the last of
[the passages

Tell me how it is there What it is like

I visit the river every day and it too is small, too small, too
[small

To a ruined room the barge will never come

A house is the space the size of the word it is *lamp* and
[street and *bread* and *rooster*

but also *wider,* having

wider arms

JOHN LATTA

TO ROBERT DUNCAN

Sortilege is all, orphan, and *nothing is trivial*—thus by chance machinations, undeflect'd melodies of the unquiet watch, we sound the *What Is,* drifting the boundaried nautical blue,

sentinels to whatever errancy intention—that aimless ward of the imagination—derives of our erring. There we demur, lingering where the western song sparrow's song is unheard of,

where its five struck notes, various, nameable, *some musical, some buzzy,* counsel certainty, a momentary loud sampling, a deft assemblage, welcome awe, and ease.

What's available is the sentence, that *mere story of loving* in the ongoing *decay of intensities,* how it stills the flux of its own leafing out by leaving something out.

This is the law of the *the,* how a simple kind of death inheres in grammar, hermetic, inviolable, new. So we keep moving, we make passages, whole brotherhoods of lost hungers, of

small fires trick'd out of hiding, demure impermanences struck idle and ghostly in the voice-wash, the intercept'd hum of handbreadth measuring the skittish colt of the page.

We mouth mysteries of music, sere inevitabilities, impure remedies of *pastiche,* yea-saying the lots of irrecoverable Time against that one vacant lot where God is He who imagines Himself.

Sentinel, we keep watch over what we cannot ward off by watching and we make ourselves of nothing and our names of nothing.

Here's a story, orphan: there was a man I never knew who called himself an orphan, a man without a permanent home who in a late recklessness of years wrote a book

that worried the imagination, that, in the reading, seemed to be like taking *pieces of a dissected map out of its box.* He made that up himself. He called truth *a divine ventriloquist.*

In youth, he let the words pour out, mongrel, fecund, dear. He coined equally: *pantisocracy, potenziate.* Fearful of *half-knowledge,* that yipping, uncertain,

of dogs in the dark, he declined late into a notably abstract silence. What I mean, sentinel, is this: there is no vanity—that spigot, that spile that draws off sap—

no vanity in *la veille de la vieillesse,* watch of the late watch, no vanity, watcher, in *mere writing,* no vanity in what song is, or what it, song'd, unsings.

GERARD DE NERVAL

Drafts of AURELIA

(Tr. from the French
by Richard Sieburth)

It was in 1840 that this *Vita nuova* began for me. I was in Brussels at the time, staying near the Grande Place on the rue Brûlée. I would usually dine at the Montagne de la Cour at the home of a great lady friend of mine and then make my way over to the Théâtre de la Monnaie where, as author of the play, I was granted free admission.[1] There I gave myself over to the heady pleasure of again seeing a charming singer whom I had known in Paris and who was now an opera star in Brussels. Every now and then another lovely woman would motion me up to her box and I would leave my seat in the orchestra stall to be by her side. We would chat about the singer whose talents she also admired. She was most gracious and most understanding about this old Parisian flame of mine and would almost invariably allow me to accompany her back to her home near the gate of Schaerbeek.

One evening I was invited to witness a seance of magnetism. I had never before seen a somnambulist. This was the very day that Napoleon's remains were being transferred back to Paris.[2] The somnambulist described the ceremony in all its details—exactly as we were to read about them in the Paris newspapers the following day. Except that she added that at the very moment that the body of Napoleon was being triumphantly paraded into the Invalides, his soul had escaped from the coffin and, taking flight toward the North, had come to rest on the plain of Waterloo.

I was quite struck by this grand idea—as was everybody else who had attended the seance, whose company included the Lord Bishop of Malines. Two days later, there was a splendid concert at the Salle de la Grande Harmonie. Among the audience were two queens. The queen of song was the person I shall henceforth call Aurélie. The other was the queen of Belgium, somewhat younger but no less lovely. Both were wearing their hair the same way, their braids gathered at the nape by a golden net in the style of the Medici.

This soiree left a vivid impression on me. I henceforth had but one thought in mind: to return to Paris and to obtain an official governmen-

tal mission for myself that might allow me to return to Flanders in a more illustrious capacity.

Upon my return, I spent six tireless weeks studying various commercial questions under the guidance of the then Minister of Education, M. Villemain. I was on the verge of successfully realizing my scheme when my zealous preoccupation with my various labors thrust me into a state of exaltation of which I was the last person to become aware. In cafes, at the homes of my friends, on the streets, I would hold forth at length about this and that—*de omni re scibili et quibusdam aliis,* in the manner of Pico de la Mirandola. For three days I gathered together all the materials for a system that explained racial affinities, the power of numbers, and the harmonies of colors—a system I elaborated upon with considerable eloquence and which impressed a good number of my friends.

Evenings, it was my habit to go have a beer at Le Peletier's[3] and to make my way up toward to the rue Navarin where I was then living. One night, around midnight, I had an hallucination. Just as the hour was striking, I passed in front of number 37 of the rue Notre-Dame-de-Lorette and there, at its entryway, I saw a woman, still young in years, whose features filled me with amazement. Her face was pale and her eyes hollow; I said to myself: "She is Death." I returned home and went to bed, thinking the world was about to end.

But when I awoke, it was light out; somewhat reassured, I spent the day seeing friends.

That evening I returned to my usual cafe where I talked about painting and music at length with my friends Paul*** and Auguste***.[4] Midnight struck—the fatal hour, to my mind; but it occurred to me that the clock of the heavens might well not be synchronized with those of the earth. I said to Paul that I was going to leave and head off toward the Orient, my motherland. He accompanied as far as the square of Cadet. There, finding myself at the intersection of several streets, I hesitated and sat down on a boundary-stone at the corner of the rue Coquenard. Paul was in vain making supernatural efforts in order to get me to budge. I felt nailed to the spot. He finally left me there around one in the morning, and seeing myself alone, I called for the help of my two friends Théophile and Alphonse whom I glimpsed in profile, like shades. A great number of vehicles filled with masked revelers kept passing by, for it was a carnival night. I examined the numbers on the cabs with great interest, absorbed in mysterious numerological calculations. Finally, in the skies above the rue Hauteville, I saw a red star with a blue halo rise. I thought I recognized the distant star of Saturn and, struggling to my feet, wandered off in that direction.

At that point I launched into some mysterious hymn whose strains filled me with a joy beyond words. At the same time, I proceeded to shed my earthly garments and scatter them about. Having reached the middle of the street, I saw myself surrounded by soldiers. I felt myself endowed with supernatural powers and it seemed to me that all I would have to do was stretch out my hands in order to knock all those poor soldiers to the ground—the way one might smooth down the nap of a fleece. I did not want to deploy my magnetic powers and allowed myself to be led away without resistance.

They laid me down on a camp bed while my clothes were drying out on the stove. It was then that I had a vision. The sky opened before my eyes like a Glory and the gods of antiquity appeared to me. Beyond their dazzling sky, I glimpsed the radiance of the seven heavens of Brahma. Morning cut this dream short.

A fresh group of soldiers replaced those who had brought me in. They clapped me into a cell with a strange individual who had also been arrested that night and who seemed to be unaware even of his own name.

Some friends came to fetch me and the visionary state continued unabated. The only difference between waking and sleep was that in the former case everything was transfigured before my eyes; everybody who approached me seemed changed; material objects possessed a kind of penumbra that altered their shape; the distortions created by the play of light and refractions of color kept me occupied with a constant series of interlinked impressions whose plausibility was further borne out by my dreams, less dependent as they were on external elements.

At first I thought I was in a house situated on the banks of the Rhine. A ray of sun was playing through the green shutters wreathed with grape vines. I was told: "You have been brought to the home of your relatives. Don't lay about in bed; they are waiting for you." There was a rustic clock on the wall and on this clock a bird proceeded to speak.

For three days I lay in a deep sleep that was rarely interrupted by dreams. A woman dressed in black appeared before my bed and it seemed to me she had hollow eyes. Except that I seemed to see tears as brilliant as diamonds pouring forth from the depths of the empty sockets. This woman was for me the specter of my mother who had died in Silesia. One day they took me off for a bath. In the froth of the white foam I thought I glimpsed various heraldic symbols; I kept on seeing three children pierced by a stake and then being transformed into three martlets. These were most likely the arms of Lorraine.

As I understood it, I was one of the three children of my name who had been thus impaled by the Tartars during the seizure of our castles.

This was on the banks of the icy Dvina.[5] My spirit soon shifted to another point of Europe, to the banks of the Dordogne where three similar castles had been rebuilt. Their tutelary angel was still the black lady. She had now reacquired her whiteness of complexion, her sparkling eyes, and was wearing an ermine gown with a tippet of swansdown draped over her white shoulders.

It was then that I had a curious dream. First I saw the genealogy of the French kings and emperors unfold like an immense moving picture—then the feudal trunk crumbled, bathed in blood. I followed the spread of the gospel across all the countries of the earth. Throughout Africa, Asia and Europe, it seemed that an immense vine was sending out its shoots around the globe. The last of these trailed off in the land of Elizabeth of Hungary.[6] Here and there immense ossuaries were constructed out the bones of Martyrs. Genghis Khan, Tamerlane[7] and the emperors of Rome had covered the world with bones. I cried out for a long time, invoking my mother under all the names bestowed upon the gods of antiquity.

When I opened my eyes, I found myself in a room that was rather cheerful. There was a clock on the wall and above this clock was a crow who seemed to be in possession of the secret of the future.

When I closed my eyes, I saw myself carried off to the castle of Johannisberg on the banks of the Rhine. I said to myself: this must be my uncle Frederick who is inviting me to his table. He received me in a magnificent dining room which was flooded with the rays of the setting sun. During the night it seemed to me that I was hurtling down into an abyss that traversed the earth. As I emerged on the other side of the world, I found myself on a pleasant island and went over to an old man who was working in a vineyard. He said to me: "Your brothers are waiting for you to have dinner." I felt I was falling toward the center of the earth. My body was painlessly buoyed along by a current of quicksilver which carried me to the heart of the planet. At that point I distinctly saw the veins and the arteries of molten metal that gave life to all its various parts. The family reunion was taking place in an immense hall where a magnificent banquet had been laid out. The patriarchs of the Bible and the queens of the Orient were seated at the places of honor. Solomon and the Queen of Sheba presided over the gathering, dressed in the most beautiful raiments of Asia. I felt a surge of warmth and justifiable pride upon recognizing the divine features of my family. I was informed that I was destined to return to earth and I embraced them all, in tears.

Upon waking, I was delighted to hear some of the old songs from the village where I had been raised. The young boy who was watching over me was singing them in a voice that touched me no end and only

the sight of the iron bars on the windows could convince me that I was not back in the village at the home of my old uncle who had been so good to me. O cruel, sweet memories, I saw you as a possible way back to a peaceful and reformed way of life. Love was once again stirring in my heart, casting its beauty on everything around me.

Several friends stopped by to see me in the morning; I took a walk through the garden with them and told them of my trials and tribulations. One of them said to me with tears in his eyes: "Is it not true that there is a God?" I reassured him on that score and we fell into each other's arms in a fond embrace.

From that point onward, the days went by more calmly. After a slight relapse, I had been taken to a sanitarium in Montmartre.[8]

Far calmer now that I found myself among sisters in misfortune whose drawings of hieroglyphs on sand or paper struck me as having a definite bearing on my own ideas, I tried to retrace the image of the goddess who had appeared to me in my dreams. Soaking a sheet of paper with the juice of plants, I had represented the Queen of the South such as I had seen her in my dreams, such as she has been depicted in the Apocalypse of the apostle John.[9] She is crowned with stars and wears a turban covered with all the dazzling colors of the rainbow. Her features are serene, her skin slightly olive, and her nose is curved like a hawk's beak. A string of pearls encircles her neck and a rounded collar of goffered lace frames her shoulders. Her dress is the color of hyacinths and one of her feet is planted on a bridge; the other rests on a wheel. One of her hands is placed on the highest rock in the mountains of Yemen, the other, pointed toward the sky, swings the *anxoka* flower, known to the uninitiated as the *flower of fire.* The snake of the heavens opens its maw to devour her, but a single grain decorated with a luminous plume plunges into the gaping chasm. The sign of the Ram appears twice on the heavenly orb where the figure of the Queen is reflected as in a mirror and takes on the features of Saint Rosalie. Crowned with stars, she appears prepared to save the world. The heavenly constellations envelop her in their radiance.

On the highest peak of the mountains of Yemen, one can see a cage whose lattices stand out against the sky. A marvelous bird is singing in it—the talisman of new ages. Leviathan lumbers through the air on his black wings. Beyond the sea there is another peak on which the name *Merovech*[10] has been inscribed. From these two points, the sites of the ancient cities of Sheba situated at the furthest extremity of the straits of Babel-Mandel,[11] one can see two races rise up and scatter themselves over the face of the earth—the white race in Asia, the black race in Africa, from which the Franks and the Gallas[12] descend. For the former,

the queen goes by the name of *Balkis,* for the latter she is called *Makeda,* that is, the great one.

The sons of Abraham and Kethurah who reach all the way back to Enoch via Eber and Joktan make up the holy race of the princes of Sheba.[13] Their capital is Axum in Abyssinia. The sons of Merovia move toward Asia, appear during the Trojan War and then, defeated by the gods of the Peloponnesus, sink into the mists of the Cimmerian mountains. It is thus that they cross Scythia and Germania in order to establish the foundations of a powerful empire beyond the Rhine. Under the names of Scandinavians and Normans they extend their conquests as far as Ultima Thule, site of the treasure of the Nibelungen, watched over by the sons of the Dragon.[14] Two knights guided by the Valkyrie sisters discover the treasure and transport it to Burgundy. Out of the heart of peace there arises the seed of a conflict that will last several centuries, for these two fatal sisters, Brunhild and Kriemhild, sacrifice to their own pride the powerful nations over whom they reign. Siegfried is treacherously wounded while hunting and the blade enters the only part of his body that has not been dyed by the blood of the Dragon. Brunhild takes her revenge by becoming the bride of Attila, the fierce king of the Huns. Avert my eyes from this bloody scene in which the Burgundians and the Huns attack each other with knives after having held a feast of reconciliation. Everything dies around the queen. But a page has avenged her by slipping behind the murderer of her husband. Here the scene changes and the lance of Charles Martel disperses the squadrons of Saracens at Poitiers.[15] Charlemagne's Empire rises in the West and his victorious eagles soon cover Germany and Italy. Woe to you, Didier, king of the Lombards. From the height of your tower you signal the approach of the conqueror, crying out: "So much iron, good God, so much iron!" The Round Table has acquired new knights and the cycle of Arthurian romances now blends harmoniously into the cycle of Charlemagne. O Queen Guinevere, fairest of the fair, what use to you are the charms and the honeyed words of your knight Lancelot? You must lay your pride at the feet of Griselda, the daughter of a humble collier.

The armed West enters into a pact with the East. Charlemagne and Harun-al-Rashid[16] held out their hands to each other over the heads of their stunned subjects. New gods surge forth from the colored mists of the Orient. . .Melusina addresses herself to the wizard Merlin and keeps him captive in a splendid palace which the undines have built on the banks of the Rhine.[17] Meanwhile the twelve peers who have set off to conquer the Holy Grail call out to him for help amid the deserts of Syria. It is only upon hearing the plaintive notes of Roland's ivory horn that Merlin tears himself away from the enchantments of the Fairy. During

this time, Viviane holds Charlemagne prisoner on the banks of the lake of Aix-la-Chapelle. The old emperor will never again awake. Held captive like Barberossa and Richard,[18] he will allow his vast empire to be dismembered; Lothar battles his brothers for its most precious morsel.

Notes to *Drafts of Aurélia*

Probably composed in December, 1853, though the latter portions may well be as late as December, 1854. The text follows the Guillaume-Pichois Pléiade edition.

1. Nerval traveled to Brussels in late 1840 for the Belgian premiere of his opera Piquillo, starring the singer Jenny Colon. The other woman is probably the pianist Marie Pleyel.
2. The ceremonies celebrating the return of Napoleon's remains to France took place on December 15, 1840.
3. A favorite cafe of Left Bank artists and writers.
4. Here, as later in the paragraph, Nerval crossed out the full names of his friends Paul Chenevard, Auguste Morel, Théophile Gautier, and Alphonse Karr.
5. Major river of northwestern Russia.
6. Thirteenth-century monarch canonized for her works of charity.
7. Legendary Mongol emperors.
8. Nerval entered the clinic of Dr. Esprit Blanche on March 21, 1841.
9. Revelation 12:1: 'And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.'
10. Legendary founder of the first Germanic-Frankish dynasty (c. 500-751).
11. Babel-Mandeb (the "Gate of Tears"), the straight separating the Red Sea from the Indian Ocean.
12. A people of southern Abyssinia.
13. A genealogy derived from *Genesis*. Joktan was the father of the thirteen tribes of southern Arabia.
14. Well before Wagner, Nerval concocts his own syncretic version of the Nibelungen legend.
15. Charles Martel defeated the Saracens at Poitiers in 732.
16. Legendary eighth-century caliph whose empire included southwest Asia and northern Africa.
17. Nerval conflates the French folktales about the fairy Mélusine with the Arthurian legend of the evil sorceress Morgan le Fay.
18. Legend had it that Frederick Barbarossa (1122–1190) lay asleep on Kyffhäusser mountain, waiting to restore the Holy Roman Empire to its former greatness. Richard Lion-Heart (1157–1199) was captured and imprisoned in the castle of Dümsteon in Austria on his return from the Crusades in 1192—just as Napoleon's son, the Aiglon, was imprisoned in the castle of Schoenbrunn in Vienna.

JEROME ROTHENBERG

AT TSUKIJI MARKET TOKYO

10/19/96, for Kato-kun

1
fish & styrofoam
& plastic wrappings
where we watched great tuna bodies
white still under frost
on carts that pass us by
here in this market without smells
a place for noble death
for fish death
we can view it from our chariot
this flat bed
moving forward—curving—in a dream
small fishes packed in rows
a giant clam like a vagina
a razor-beak *sayori* red dot at its tip
the ***kime*** showing god's large eye
(he said) or under lamplight
gills still moving
fish blood seeping out
the blood of white fish with what stolen beauty
orange fins & tails of poison *fugu*
nearby eels in vats of blood & water
& the dark saws splitting flesh & bone
the severed tuna heads their mouths still open
black fish wrapped in ice
a red slash underneath its head
eye wide & dry
a cavity that cuts down deep
that lets the hand move in & out
to draw out lungs & guts

shrimps wriggling sad survivors in the sawdust
"insects of the sea"
my mind aswim with these
with mouths that open in the blood they float through
miles of searching filaments
like flags for death
a paradise of bubbles fast ascending
tiny eggs & sperm
each one a seedbed for a hundred kannons
breaking into life
the cry of food & sex so strong
there is no wrapper can contain it
but it fills the air
& from my mouth it issues like the dead
the voices of our fathers calling
ploughed back in the earth
without regrets
reminding us how gorgeous death is
blood of fishes staining the white flesh
red flowers & round open eyes

2
THE TALE

He walks among the others: animals & neighbors. In the land of islands someone comes to meet him, tall & with an eye that cuts through space. Immaculate. The man cries out & falls. His death comes when it does by force of nature. In this way we feel the earth shake till it draws the light around us. Lungs and guts are emptied. When the shock breaks through the crust a block of houses rises from the sea and burrows down. Its people lie beneath a wall of boulders: stones a god shakes free. They see the fish swept up into a stranger's net. The corridors are white & lined with fish blood. Death is always sudden, always comes after the fatal blow. A mallet cracks the fish skull. They blast a hole into the fish's maw. The messengers who spoke a broken language, also now stare through broken eyes. We walk among the shelters & the empty lots. Awash in Tsukiji where the boards

cry out with fish death. Continue with the work he hands you. To provoke & probe. A life disrupted is no less a life. Those who were sleeping when the floats drove by continued sleeping. Those who were awake were faster—like fathers running in & out of dreams. The prince of tides has written this for you. The land of islands.

3
for Makoto Oda

"a great quake
"shook the earth
the old poem has it
thinking how our legs have lost their balance
books & ladders tumbling down
a dream of fish death
where the bathers in their terror move like fish
the man who has an old world in his mind
sees it return to him
the year behind him lost to sleep
a rush of water dims his eyes
the words rewoven to the present day

•

[HOJOKI—CHOMEI IN KYOTO—1177 A.D.—KOBE 1995/96]

months passed & people spoke about the quake no longer
but a skull would sometimes turn up in the earth
heavy with water
& the aftershocks now were inside us
carried with us day by day
the earthquake hidden underneath the ground
our houses like our ashes swept away

this is how a capital can disappear
or boats be swallowed by the earth
covered by mountains
a city with dead houses (someone thinks)
how long will they be standing?
– until the wild boars clog up all your streets
– until the mountain cleaves in two

days grow darker
world knows what its equal is
an earthquake spewing havoc all around us
when the elements light up

the days go white with aftershocks & black with clouds
houses slip into the earth consumed as dust
like that stirred up by horses racing thru a valley
where land gives way & blights them
trapped in the event

but when they speak the language of the gods
no words come out
therefore the masks they use are hinged
to make a show of speech

no one is free of it no heart
escapes its vanities
but all their things record the years that pass
the way the wind shadows their months
all times abandoned to its ceaseless shaking
like a dragon moving up & down
like thunderbolts that strike them dead
like smoke that covers a pagoda
waves that break on rocks
seas burying the earth

a fish
under the light

a message brought out of the shadows

fin & claw
& claw
tearing at your throat

periphery
pursuing

torn to shreds

how many years before it ends?
how dark the sin? how raw the talk that ends it?
how cruel the buddha who resides here
who abides catastrophes & fires
aftershocks of quakes that pass us by
events that raise us on their wings
then let us crash pale billows
swelling up around the little temples
the little shorelines under water
rivers driven skyward in one final quake

•

forgotten with the dead
in glory
massive bodies hidden under frost

the words recorded
of a man beside himself who speaks
who says

"be here
"pretend

(so like the world they are
so like the man himself

the water underneath his window
still a haven for lost birds

uncertain thoughts

uncertain passage thru a foreign world

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KASUYA EIICHI

THREE PIECES

(Tr. from the Japanese
by D.W. Wright)

THE GARBAGE BARGE

"time on the water a garbage barge"
—Paul Celan

Though it certainly can't be said to be a small boat, it's still a bit strange to find there are bathing quarters on a garbage barge. After all, for a boat used simply as a place to pile up rubble, a room of bathtubs isn't likely to be necessary.

And yet there it is, at the end of a long corridor leading back to the stern of the boat. Pulling open the heavy iron door, you can see the bathtubs and the faucets along the wall lit up by dark lights that hang down from the ceiling.

This is called the community's bathing quarters, and indeed the far inner quarters are surprisingly large. But what's even more surprising is how there are always a number of men there bathing in the hot waters.

These men, there's something about them, somehow there's something unnatural.

Whether soaking in the tubs, or washing their fingers and toes, or seated on stools at the faucets, all of them wear the faces of elderly men, although their bodies are scrawny and small.

If they notice they're being watched, they stop all of their movements at once and turn and stare this way. Anger fills their staring gaze and not a one speaks a word, as if turned to petrified stone, each seems frozen in his position, unmoving.

And irrespective of the chilliness of the air in the bathing quarters, they remain, for hours, unmoving. Anyone who has seen this, be it only once, will never again forget it.

From what sort of world did these men make their escape? But all sorts of explanations are given for the men in the bathing quarters.

Perhaps I speak with exaggeration, still I think that it may be said that all those explanations could easily be extended to everything there is in the world we live in.

But having said that, let me say that the only people who can truly know are those who know the name of the boat. Because the only ones who truly remember its existence are those who due to some experience of anguish in some distant place have come to think this whole world's no more than rubble.

In their—but no, now this deep night's sea of blood is no one's in particular, and the garbage barge itself is no more than the illusion of their far-off bathing quarters. And now they say that their ship has dropped anchor.

GHOST

Why do the dead seem so pitiful to us? Is it because we imagine how poorly he lived? How he was never allowed to do as he wished?

On the day of his birth, he was sealed into a giant blood egg, an egg invisible not only to himself, but to all those around him as well. If only he had known it! He had plenty of strength to break out of it.

But what was it, really—this giant blood egg that shut him off from the world? Whatever it was, it made him laughable. And impenetrable. Because of that egg, nothing ever went right. In a port city, he grew up in total poverty. When business failure followed on failure, he became an egg peddler. And then late in life, when he was finally able to start a family, all of a sudden, he began to drown himself in saké.

Cast off by his family, in horrendous health, he dropped down dead in a alley behind a train station. So he never was able to break out of the giant blood egg that was doing him in. And so his days ended as twisted as ever, in that twisted port city of disgrace and debt.

I know since, like him, I too make my living walking around and peddling eggs. I know because we were brothers.

We met once a month, on a dark overpass of the soul, a place known only to the two of us. And there we consoled each other. Could it be that it was all the fault of some flaw like a spot on an egg? One night at a bar, I caught myself getting so slobbering drunk I might as well have been him.

It is everyone's fault, that there are people who live in our world and our time as if already half-dead. Existence, for him, was a merciless city, bringing nothing but anguish and pain.

If you walk about, selling eggs, in a city where the snow falls darkly, in a city on the verge of vanishing, you soon begin to understand. His ghost—but look, even though he's now a ghost, he wears the same smirk he always wore when we were drinking—I hear his ghost softly whisper.

You! you always were a strange one! I never sold anything but ordinary eggs. And more than anyone I know, I lived my life fully and happily before I died! So let me ask, OK? for god's sake! in what world? and what duck was it laid your giant blood egg?

THE MIRACLES THAT VIRTUE CAN BRING

So what if one day a man was eating bean-filled dumplings? Does that mean that there was anything notably strange about that day?

It was just that he wanted to sit there eating bean-filled dumplings so badly it hurt. And it's said that he sat there eating the bean-filled dumplings without even unbinding his headband.

This was at a small tea-shop on the banks of a river, on a late spring day, while petals were riding and raining down the breeze. In short, that pack-horse driver, in his ripped-up clothes, gave himself heart and soul to the eating of bean-filled dumplings.

Sitting cross-legged before a large saucer piled high with bean-filled dumplings, pupils thinned in his bliss, he shoved yet another ball into his mouth.

But it's said that the bean-filled dumplings weren't merely bean-filled dumplings. And it's said that that man there eating bean-filled dumplings wasn't merely a man sitting there eating bean-filled dumplings.

While something like quiet water made a mystical sound, the man in his ripped-up loincloth and also the old woman who laughed to see the man's bared bottom as she bent to wipe up something—just as they were they were beings in the lofty and faraway country of the miracles that virtue can bring.

For it's in just such a way that the Buddhas, with gentle deceptions, reveal our world to us. Just so, on a late spring day, while petals ride and rain down the breeze, a tea-shop on the banks of a river is changed into a deep and fearful world in eternity.

Whether true or not, there's more. A young girl from the tea-shop is sent out back to clean greens, with her skirt ruckled up at the water's edge. Something stings the eyes, while something, maybe that horse hitched up over there, permits one to worship at the whiteness of her thighs.

The Late Poems of Meng Chiao

Translated by David Hinton

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CHARLES BERNSTEIN

A TEST OF POETRY

What do you mean by *rashes of ash*? Is *industry*
systematic work, assiduous activity, or ownership
of factories? Is *ripple* agitate lightly? Are
we *tossed in tune* when we write poems? And
what or who *emboss with gloss insignias of air*?

Is the *Fabric* about which you write in the epigraph
of your poem an edifice, a symbol of heaven?

Does *freight* refer to cargo or lading carried
for pay by water, land or air? Or does it mean
payment for such transportation? Or a freight
train? When you say a *commoded journey,*
do you mean a comfortable journey or a good train
with well-equipped commodities? But, then, why
do you drop the 'a' before *slumberous friend*? And
when you write, in "Why I Am Not a Christian"
You always throw it down / But you never
pick it up—what is *it*??

In "The Harbor of Illusion," does *vein*
refer to a person's vein under his skin or
is it a metaphor for a river? Does *lot*
mean one's fate or a piece of land?
And does *camphor* refer to camphor trees?
Moreover, who or what is *nearing.* Who or
what has *fell*? Or does *fell* refer to the
skin or hide of an animal? And who or what has
stalled? Then, is the *thoroughfare of*
noon's atoll an equivalent of *the template*?

In "Fear of Flipping" does *flipping* mean
crazy?

How about *strain,* does it mean
a severe trying or wearing pressure or
effect (such as a strain of hard work),
or a passage, as in piece of music?
Does *Mercury* refer to a brand of oil?

In the lines
shards of bucolic pastry anchored
against cactus cabinets, Nantucket buckets
could we take it as—pieces of pies
or tarts are placed in buckets (which
are made of wood from Nantucket)
anchored against cabinets (small
rooms or furniture?) with cactus?

What is *nutflack*?

I suppose the *caucus of caucasians*
refers to the white people's meeting
of a political party to nominate candidates.
But who is Uncle Hodgepodge?
And what does *familiar freight*
to the returning antelope mean?

You write, *the walls are our floors.*
How can the *walls* be floors if the floors
refer to the part of the room which forms
its enclosing surface and upon which one
walks? In *and the floors, like balls,*
repel all falls—does *balls* refer to
nonsense or to any ball like a basket ball
or to guys? Or to a social assembly for
dancing? *Falls* means to descend
from a higher to a lower
or to drop down wounded or dead?

But what is *the so-called overall mesh*?

Is the *garbage heap* the garbage heap in the ordinary sense? Why does *garbage heap* exchange for *so-called overall mesh*? Since a *faker* is one who fakes, how can *arbitrary* reduce to *faker*?

Who or what are disappointed not to have been?

Does *frames* refer to form, constitution, or structure in general? Or to a particular state, as of the mind?

In the sentence,
If you don't like it
colored in, you can always Xerox it
and see it all gray
—what is *it*? What does *colored in* mean?

A few lines later you write,
You mean, image farm when you've got bratwurst—
Does *bratwurst* refer to sausage?
Does the line mean—the sausage you saw reminded you of a farm which you imagined?

Does *fat-bottom boats* refer to boats with thick bottoms?

Is *humble then humped* used to describe the actions of one who plays golf? In the phrase *a sideshow freak*—the *freak* refers to a hippie? *Sideshow* refers to secondary importance? Or an abnormal actor in the sideshow? Then, who or what is *linked* with *steam of pink*. And how about *the tongue-tied tightrope stalker*—does the *stalker* refer to one who is pursuing

stealthily in the act of hunting game? The stalker
is a witness at first and then a witless witness?

You write *The husks are salted*:
what kind of nut husks can be salted for eating?
What does *bending* mean—to become curved,
crooked, or bent? Or to bow down in submission
or reverence, yield, submit? Does *bells*
refer to metallic sounding instruments or
a kind of trousers?

Just a few lines later you have the phrase
Felt very poured. Who felt poured? Toys?
Is *humming* in the sense of humming a song?
Stepped into where? *Not being part of* what?

In "No Pastrami" (*Walt! I'm with you in Sydney / Where the echoes of Mamaroneck howl /Down the outback's pixilating corridors*)—does the *pastrami* refer
to a highly seasoned shoulder cut of beef? Is
Mamaroneck a place in the U.S. where wild oxes howl?
I take it *corridors* refers to the passageway
in the supermarket? Could I read the poem as—
The speaker is doing shopping in a supermarket
in Sydney; he is walking along the eccentric
passageways among the shelves on which goods
are placed; he does not want to buy the pastrami
as he seems to have heard the echoes of wild oxes
howling in the U.S. while he addresses Walt Whitman?

In *No end to envy*, does the envy refer to admire or
in the bad sense?

This poem is based on a letter from Ziquing Zhang, who translated poems from ***Rough Trades*** and ***The Sophist*** for ***Selected Language Poems*** (Chengdu, China: Sichuan Literature and Art Publishing House, 1993); quotations from the poems are italicized.

TAJ JACKSON

APPRENTICE

The Easter gift, little cloth-pillow woman
presiding on the easel lip
conducts cerulean, umber, swaths
of indigo and siena, magenta
by emerald, wielding the palette knife, atropos of canvas
limits, clotho in her handiwork, *materia,* lachesis adding
slack to the lines.

Ex machina, she takes the Male Votive Figure
from SUMER ART, reedy on my bookshelf, as a lover,
craving white gypsum and bitumen, a ridged beard, eyes
immense in his Mesopotamian terror.
He extracts the square and cube root,
sun-dried bricks, cuneiform
thronging his lovenotes. The evil spirits

of his fathers

swarm

like

flies.

Of enamel appendages, she bears a hyperbolic bonnet,
a skyblue turban–fruitless brim, no linen roses,
the iridescent capital the glazed swan,
beady black beak
shut hard on song, on finality and bodily

ascension,

beady black beak,
little moue of urban street
violence and plumage.

She is its young. A starry scholar.
Close the chapter called the Standard Model.

She pitches Sumer's *lex talionis*
to the plants and the dust motes, not sweeping,
old eye for an eye,
the condemned in incarnations.

(Alabama's executed Weeks
devout in campy fantasia foretold his return,
giant flying turtle to rule the world.)

Her monologue is like a watching the sky.

She
succors the chain gang. Of death sentences she knows
equations of muse and doll; of execution
the guillotines
as extravaganza, wormwood, and ***hemlock*** says clotho,
MTV Vulgate by lethal injection, much of the public
fuss and bask, fuss
and bask.
—Fairweather shuffling loggerheads.—

"Sudan," Arabic for ***black,***
the recaptured slave is
strapped to the sides of the camel which,
driven to the river, drinks and swells,
dislocating bones.

Lachesis imagines
death by decibels, sound set so that it will not stop
rising.

The ears of the recaptured
slave are stuffed
with insects and plugged with stones—
left bound for days,
to madden.

. . .
Lobe-foot birds from feathered dinosaurs—
her head is topped
with the extinct,

crucifix swan her pun burden and she sags, lolls
believing our counterpart
is the condemned each time,
the mud hardening to rock,
fossil track, wrath, bedroom etiquette, disk error
messages, the press
cards of 30s radicals, winding sheets and myrrh,
and more delusion, listen,
the volcanic, the roadrunner,
a sermon of hollow bones,
a filth of ice, rest, rest, a freight of
[gravity, leaden,
neutrinos,
the faded colors,
how to spin
please
gold from reprisal,
of her painted ichor lenses
how to stare. . .

LORINE NIEDECKER

NEXT YEAR OR I FLY MY ROUNDS, TEMPESTUOUS

(Edited, with a Note, by Jenny Penberthy)

EDITOR'S NOTE

Lorine Niedecker's "Next Year or I fly my rounds, Tempestuous" surfaced during my recent probing of the Louis Zukofsky Collection at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, Austin, Texas. The poem was filed with miscellaneous items of unidentified authorship. It is handwritten on small pieces of paper pasted into a 27-page pocket calendar, 4½" x 3¾", two weeks per page, the hole-punched pages held together by a red velvet ribbon tied in a bow. Niedecker's pastings obscure "The Favorite Sunlit Road Calendar's" own text, platitudes such as these–January 13-26: "True bravery is/shown by performing/ without witness what/one might be capable/of doing before all the/ world"; Sept. 22- Oct. 5: "To reach the port/of heaven, we must/ sometimes sail with/the wind and some-/times against it–but/we must sail and not/drift, nor lie at anchor." The original text is *just* legible when held to the light. Her spirited title inverts rather than pastes over the calendar's title page. The poem makes no explicit reference to the pasted-over homilies but the aleatoric nature of the palimpsest exudes parody.

Given that the poem was held by Zukofsky and given his dating on the back of the calendar–"Xmas 1934"–the poem was likely Niedecker's gift to the poet whom she had now known in person for a full calendar year. The gift looks forward confidently to another year of friendship just as it recalls the past year. A pocket calendar, an intimate mnemonics. But the poem is also a surrealist composition and an experiment in form. The calendar is under siege. She teases the mnemonic device by linking her non-sequitur and baffling lines to the predictable chronology of a calendar. Earlier in 1934 she had written to Harriet Monroe about her desire "to discredit all journal method everywhere. . . ." The same letter also talks of adding a section to "Year Before Last" and of composing a piece called "Year After Next." (Neither of these works has survived.) Her challenge to the calendar–earlier poems had chal-

lenged the dictionary—apparently extended to include "Next Year or I fly my rounds, Tempestuous."

Zukofsky showed the poem to his friends: in January 1936, he wrote to Niedecker about William Carlos Williams' enthusiasm for the form of "last year's Xmas calendar" and his interest in seeing it published. Like some of her other surrealism, this poem posed obvious difficulties for publication. She was, however, always keen to see her work in print, and any misgivings one might have about publishing an apparently private gift must contend with the ambition of her enterprise. While much of the poem is written in the first person, in lines that appear to be addressed to Zukofsky—"Don't worry/about the comma,/ darling"—the sleuthing reader is seldom rewarded. Privacy remains secure.

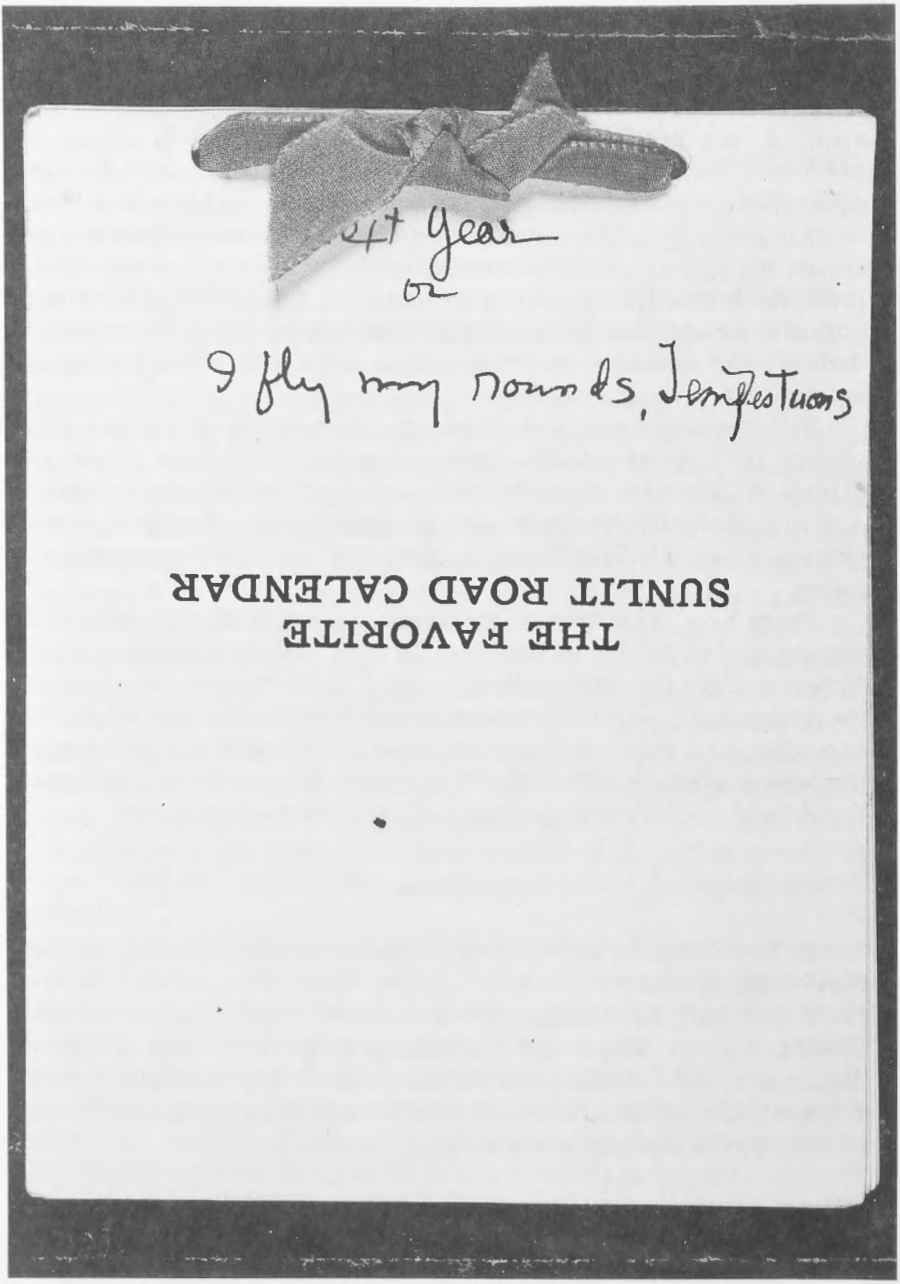
The poem is a free and delighted collaboration of cogency and chance. It is assured, worldly, funny, at ease with its liberties. There are echoes of Dickinson, Zukofsky, and Niedecker's subsequent writings. And it is closest in style to the two surrealist plays—"President of the Holding Company" and "Fancy Another Day Gone"—that were still to follow.

"Next Year or I fly my rounds, Tempestuous" is the second recent discovery of a 'lost' Niedecker poem. In 1995, Burton Hatlen found the five-page, eight-part poem, "Progression," in the Ezra Pound papers at the Beinecke Library. "Progression" is dated January 6, 1934 although, according to a letter to Harriet Monroe, a version of the poem was already complete by mid-1932. "Next Year or I fly my rounds, Tempestuous" adds to the growing record of Niedecker's early career.

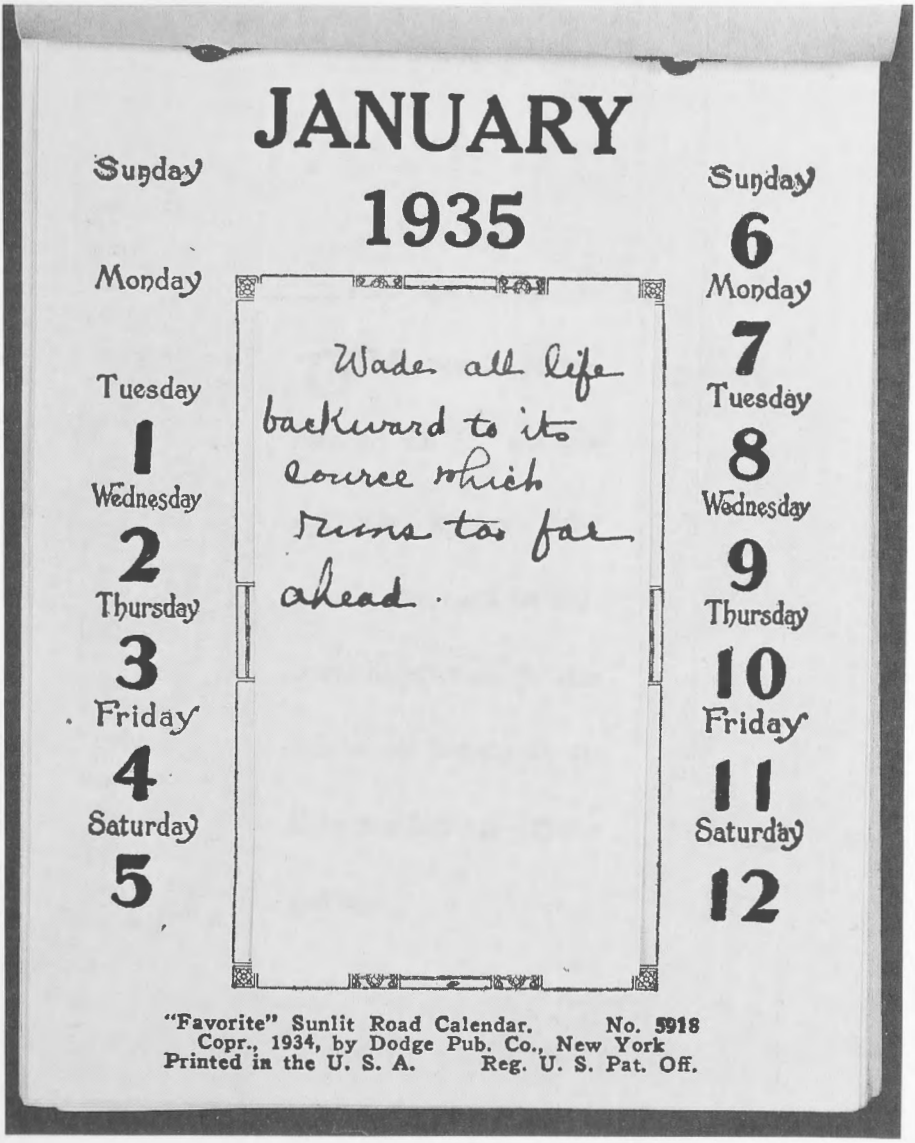
*****

Niedecker's letters to Mary Hoard and Harriet Monroe appear in *Lorine Niedecker: Woman & Poet*, ed. Jenny Penberthy (Orono, Maine: National Poetry Foundation, 1996). Thanks to Cid Corman and the HRHRC, Austin, Texas, for permission to publish, and to Cathy Henderson, Barbara Smith, and Pat Fox for their help during and since my visit to the HRHRC. Niedecker's Collected Poems will be published in 1998 by the University of California Press.

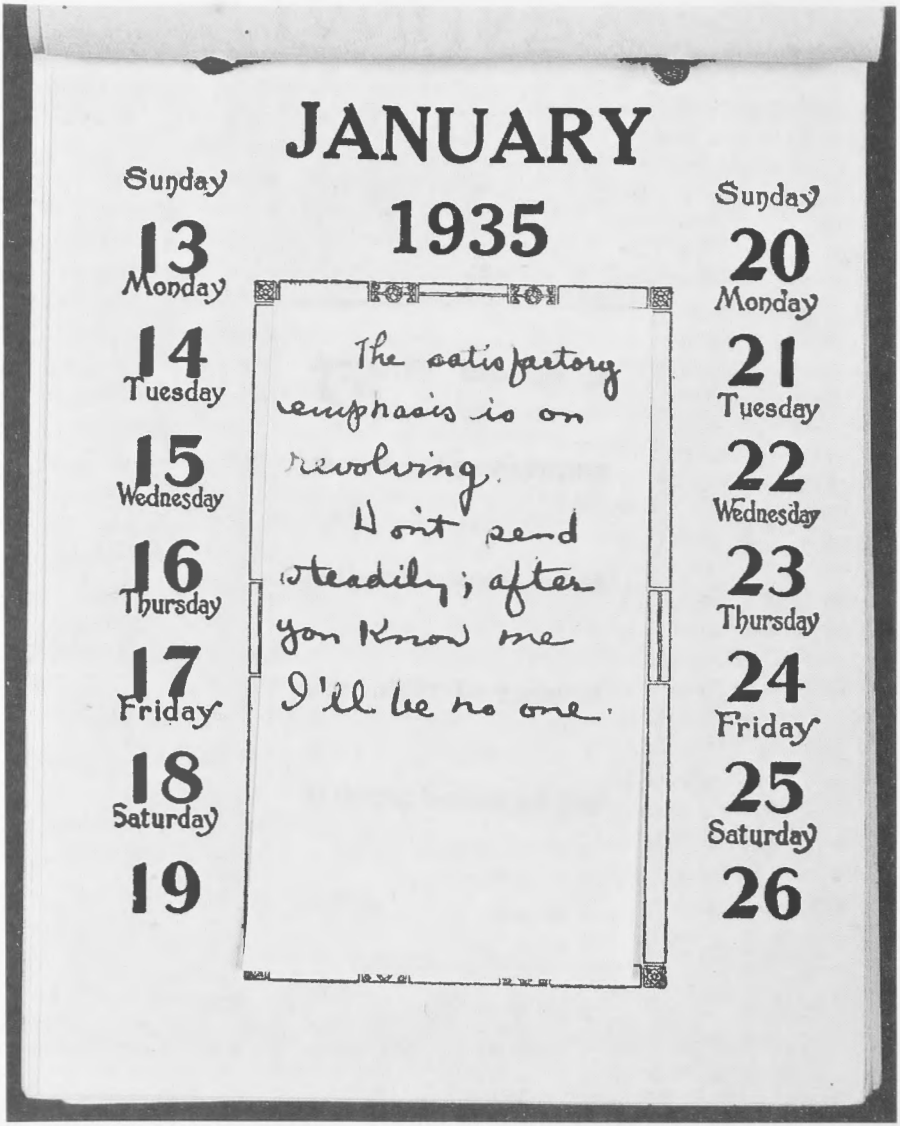
—Jenny Penberthy



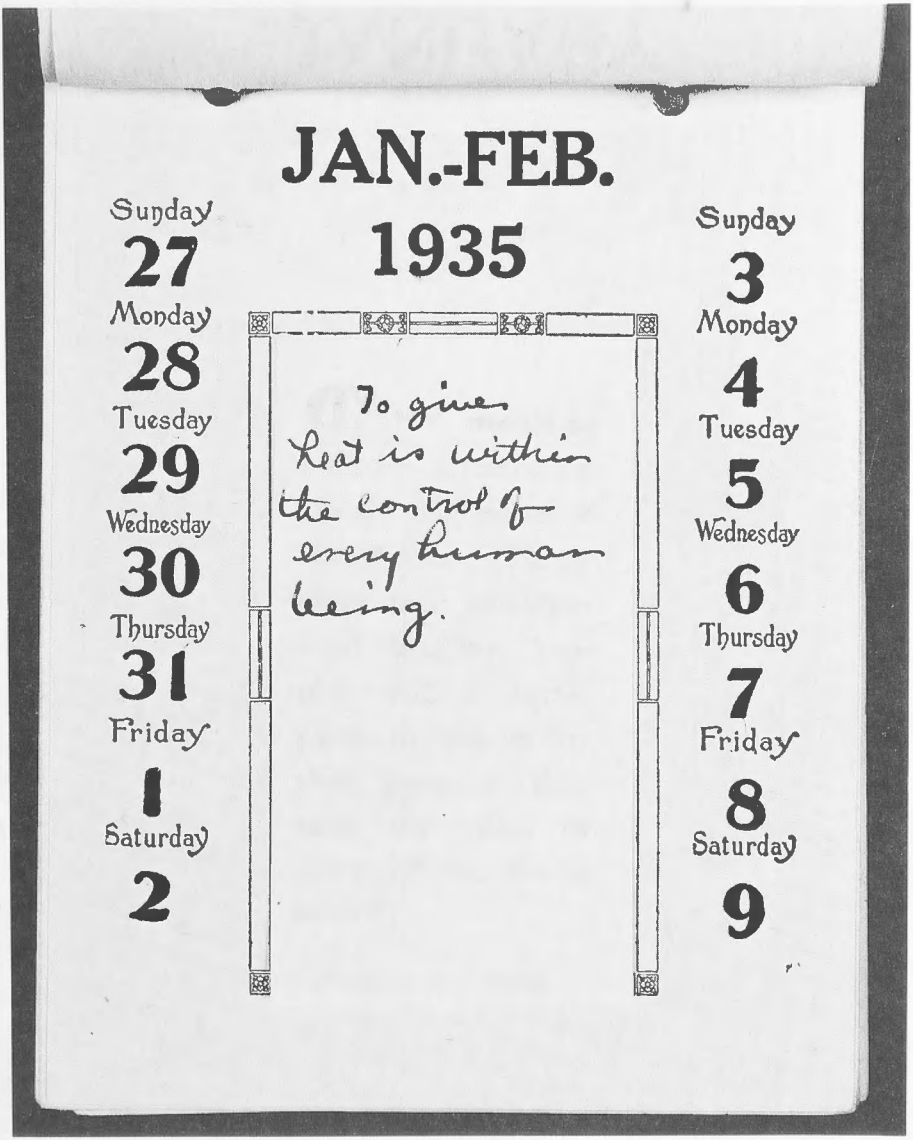
Next Year/or/I fly my rounds, Tempestuous



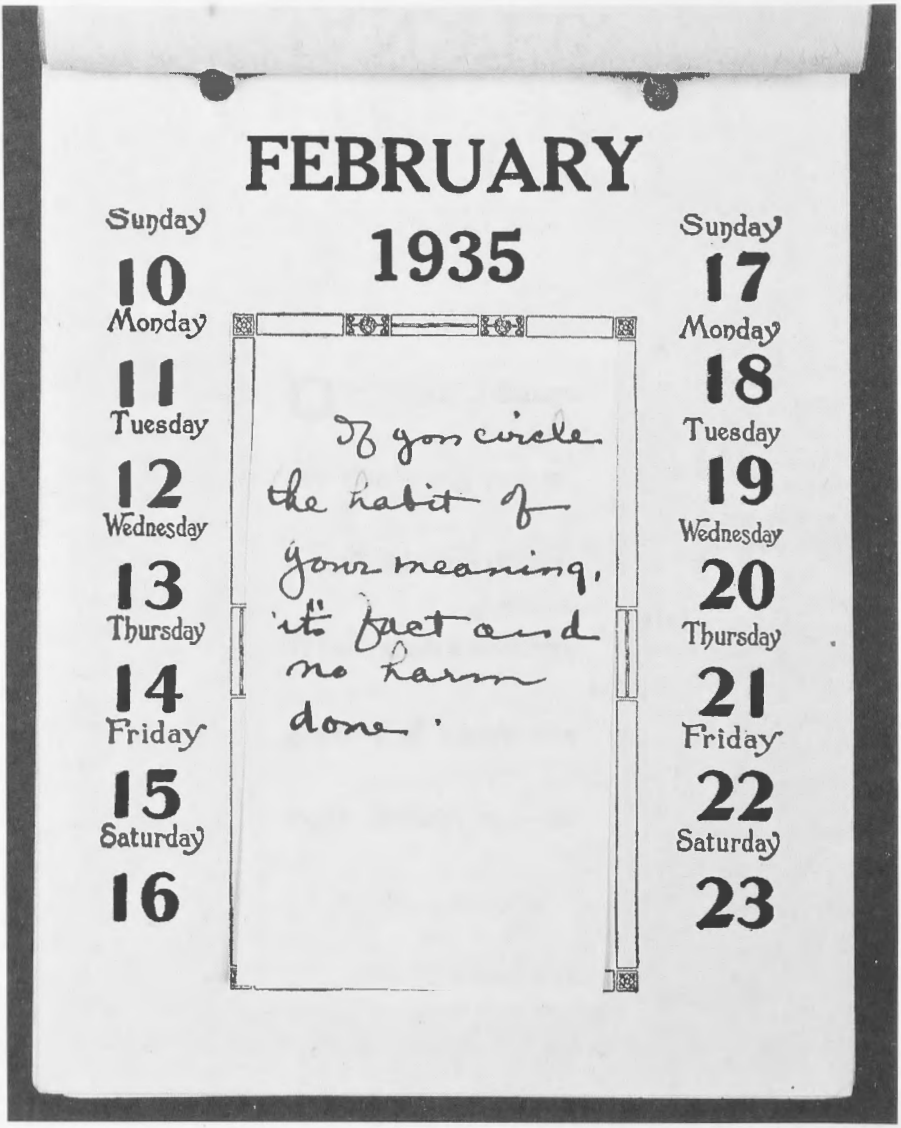
Wade all life/backward to its/source which/runs too far/ahead.



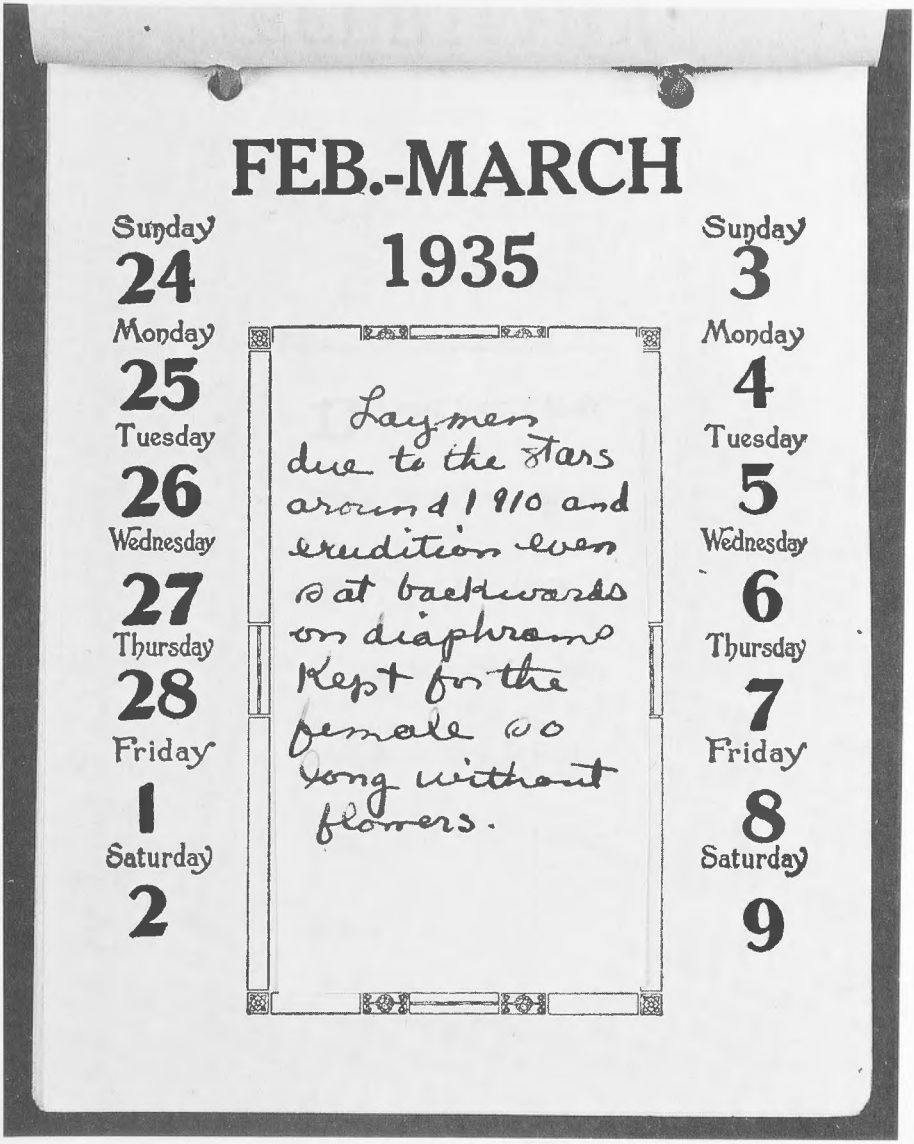
The satisfactory/emphasis is on/revolving./Don't send/steadily;
after/you know me/I'll be no one.



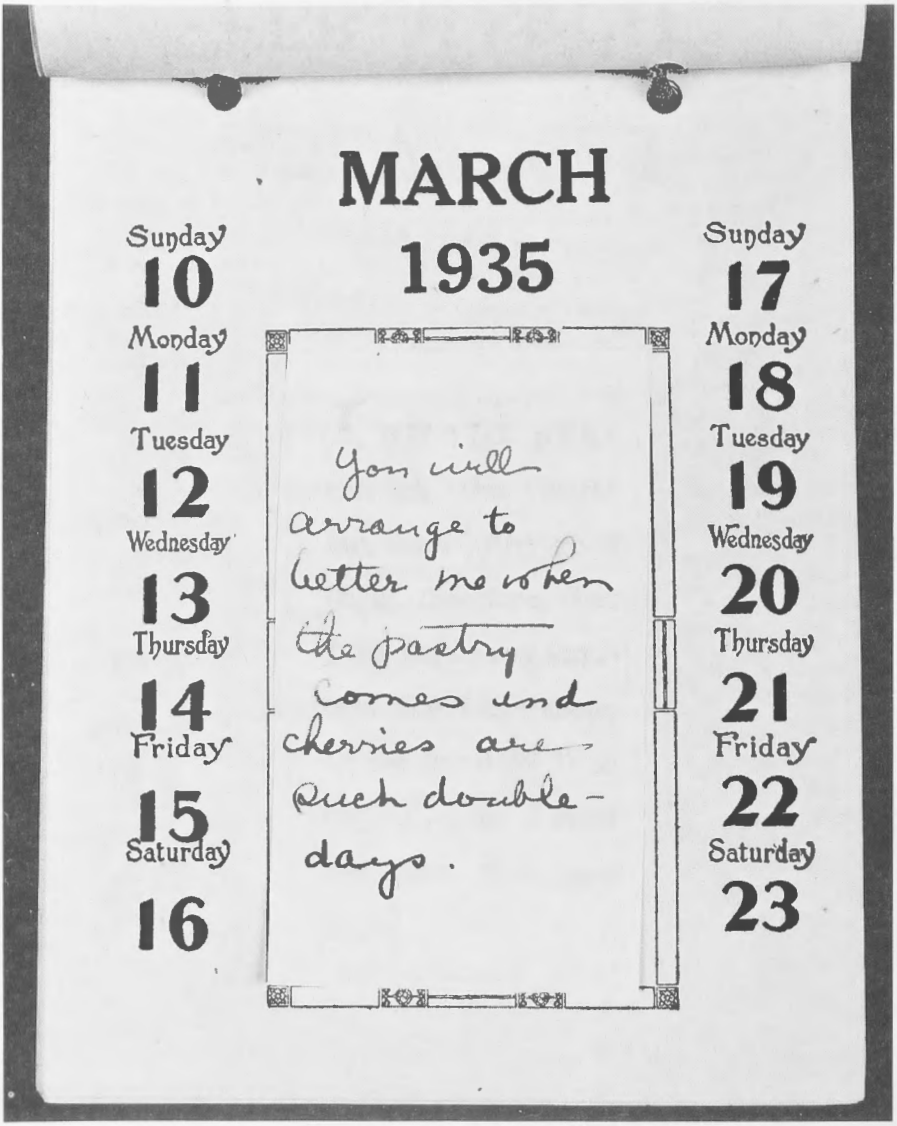
To give/heat is within/the control of/every human/being.



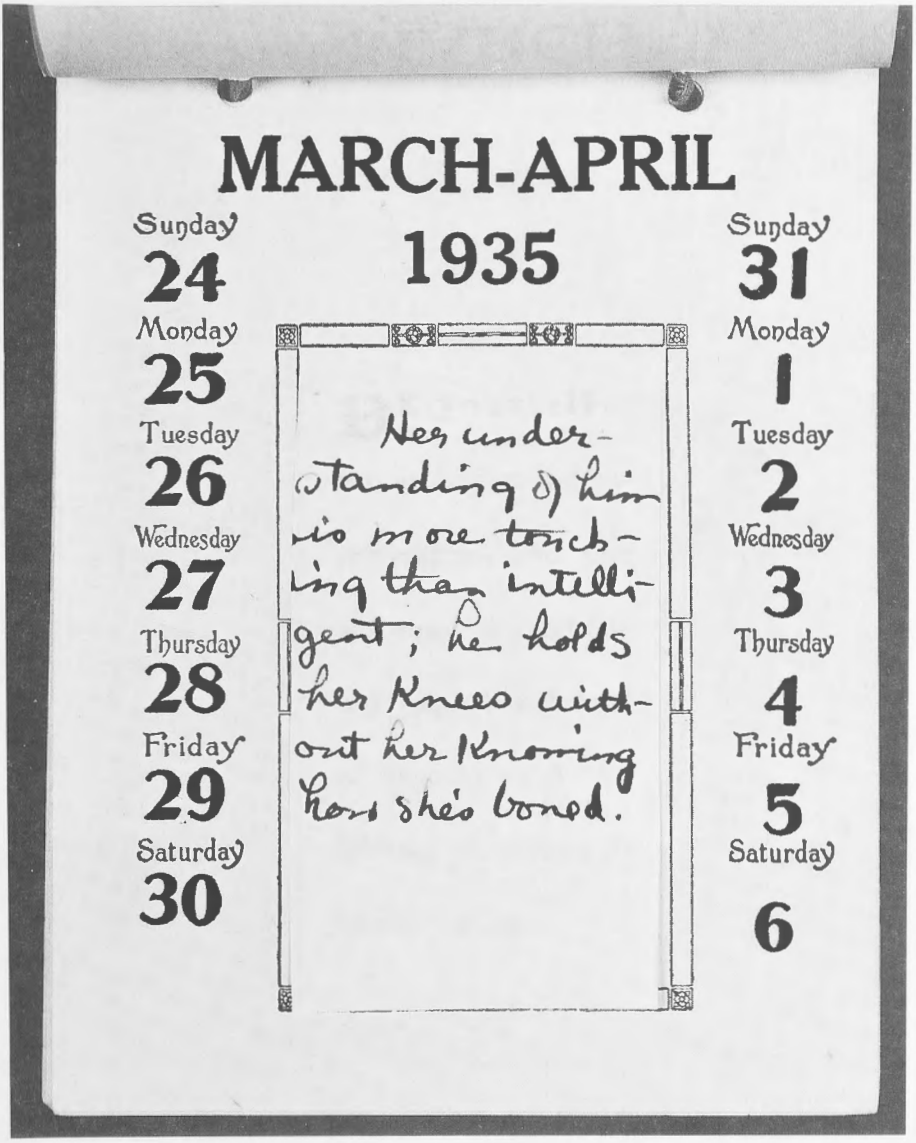
If you circle/the habit of/your meaning,/it's fact and/no harm/ done.



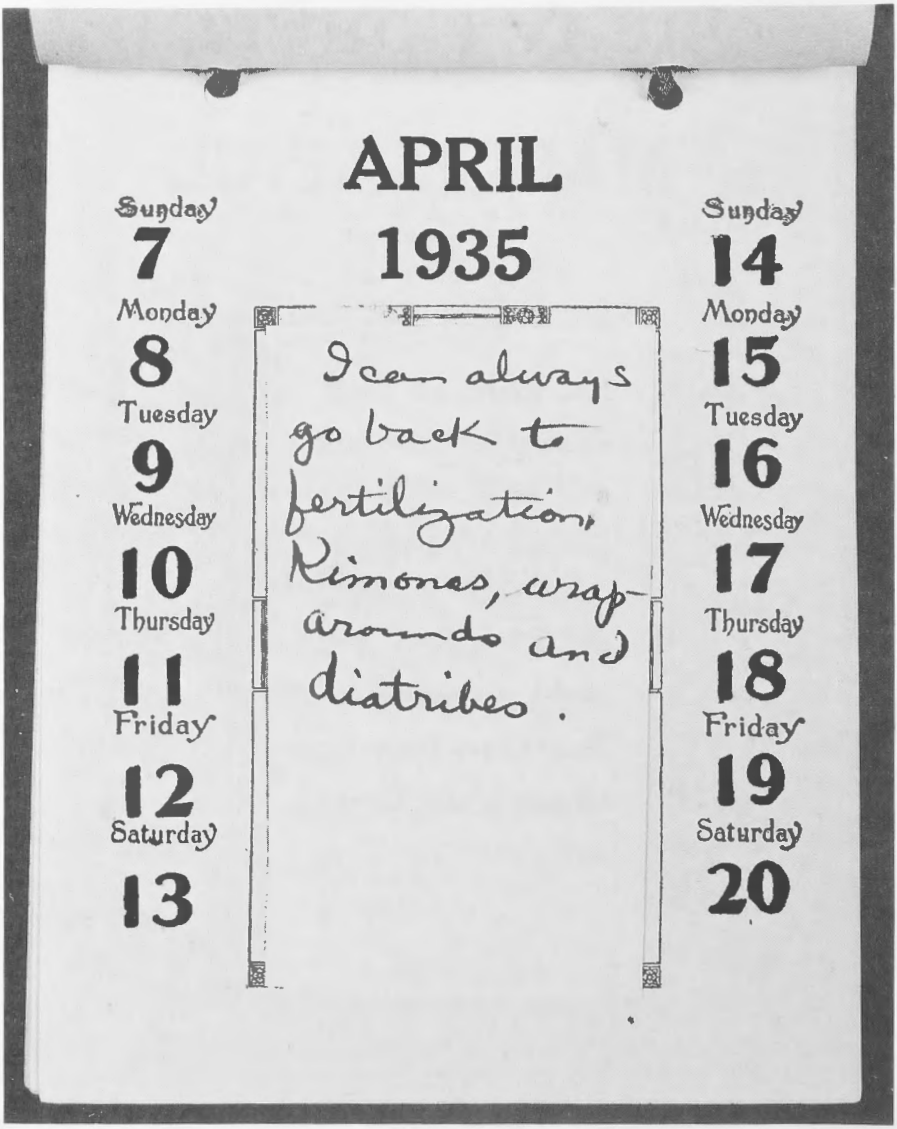
Laymen/due to the stars/around 1910 and/erudition even/sat backwards/on diaphragms/kept for the/female so/long without/flowers.



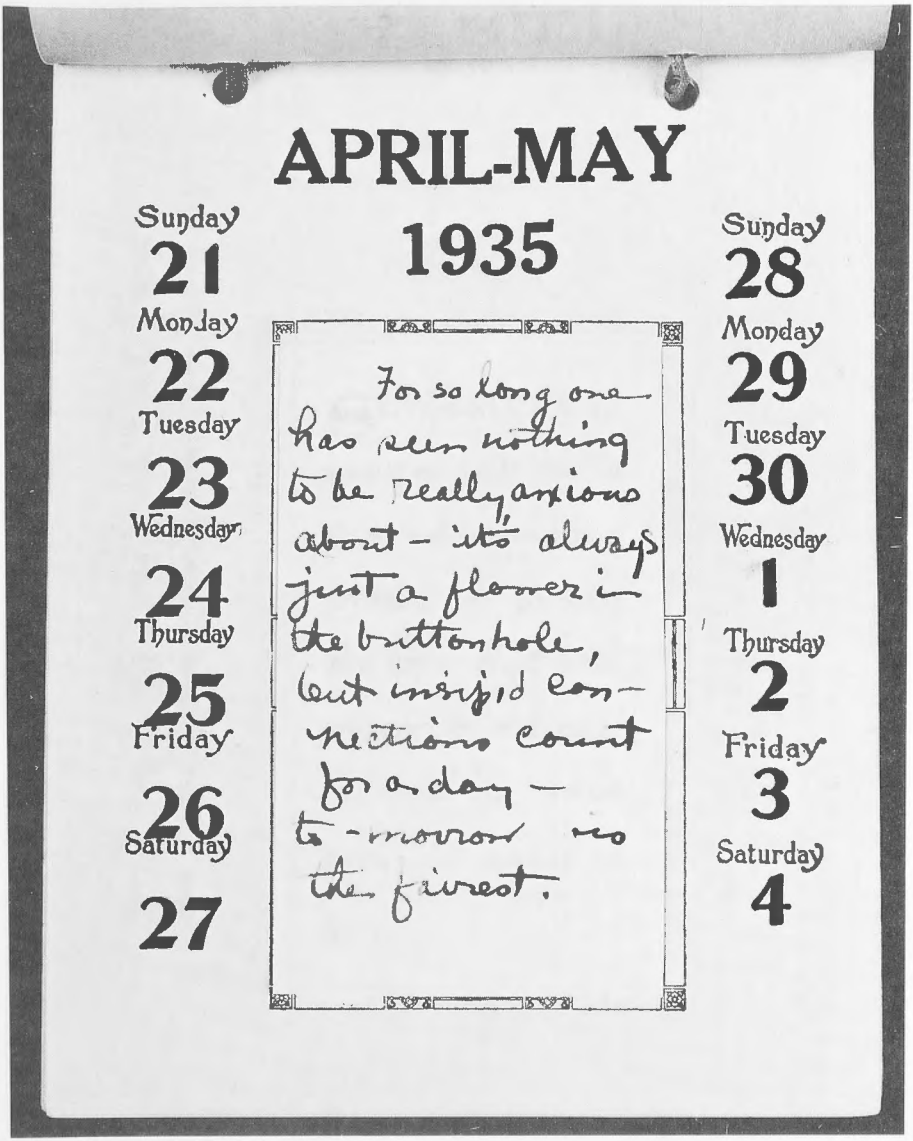
You will/arrange to/better me when/the pastry/comes and/cherries are/such double-/days.



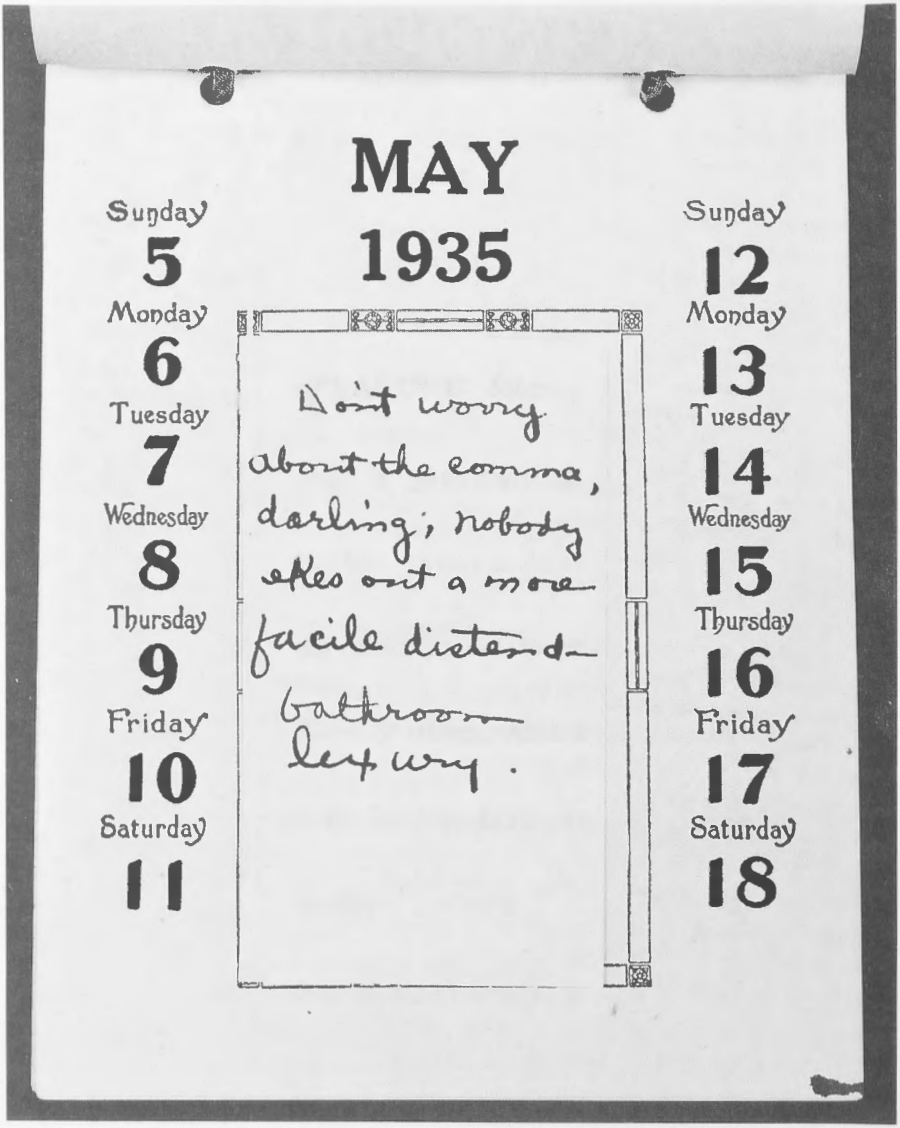
Her under/standing of him/is more touch-/ing than intelli-/gent;
he holds/her knees with-/out her knowing/how she's boned.



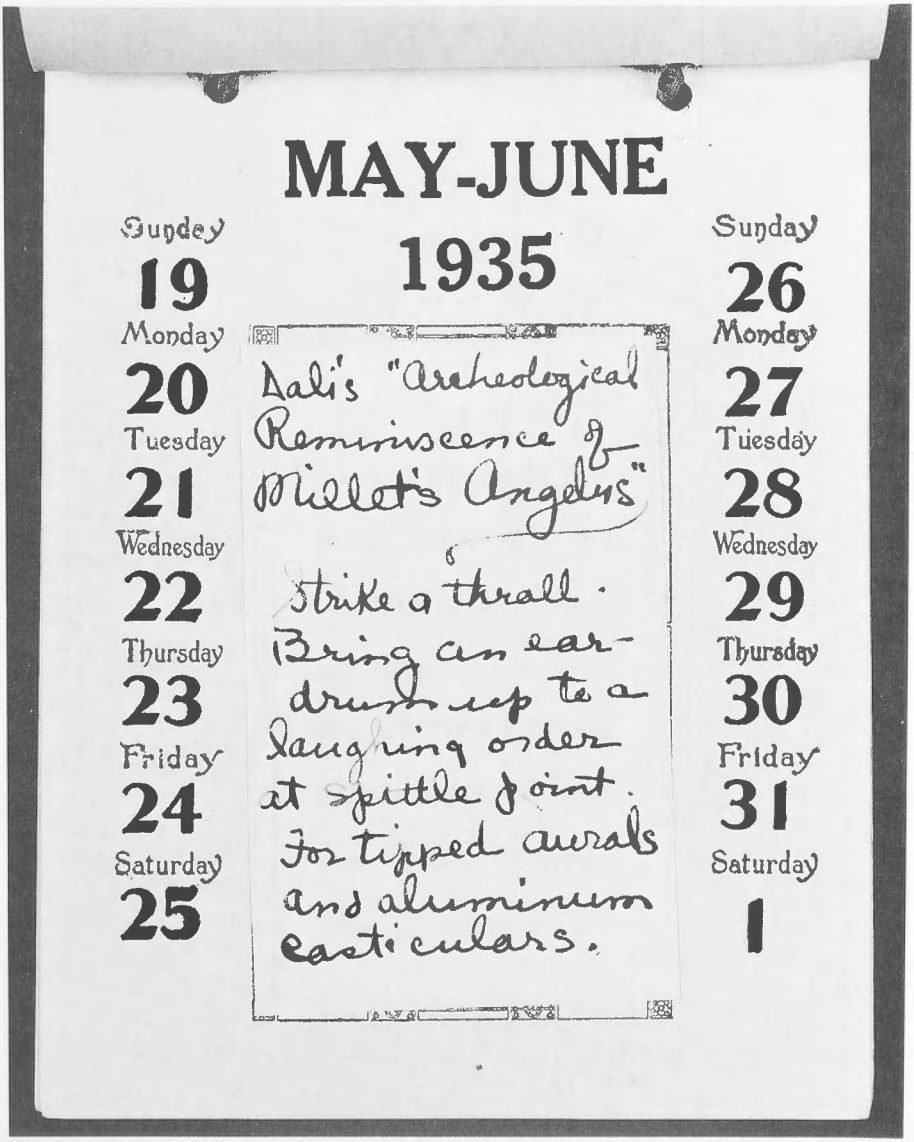
I can always/go back to/fertilization,/kimonos, wrap-/arounds and/diatribes.



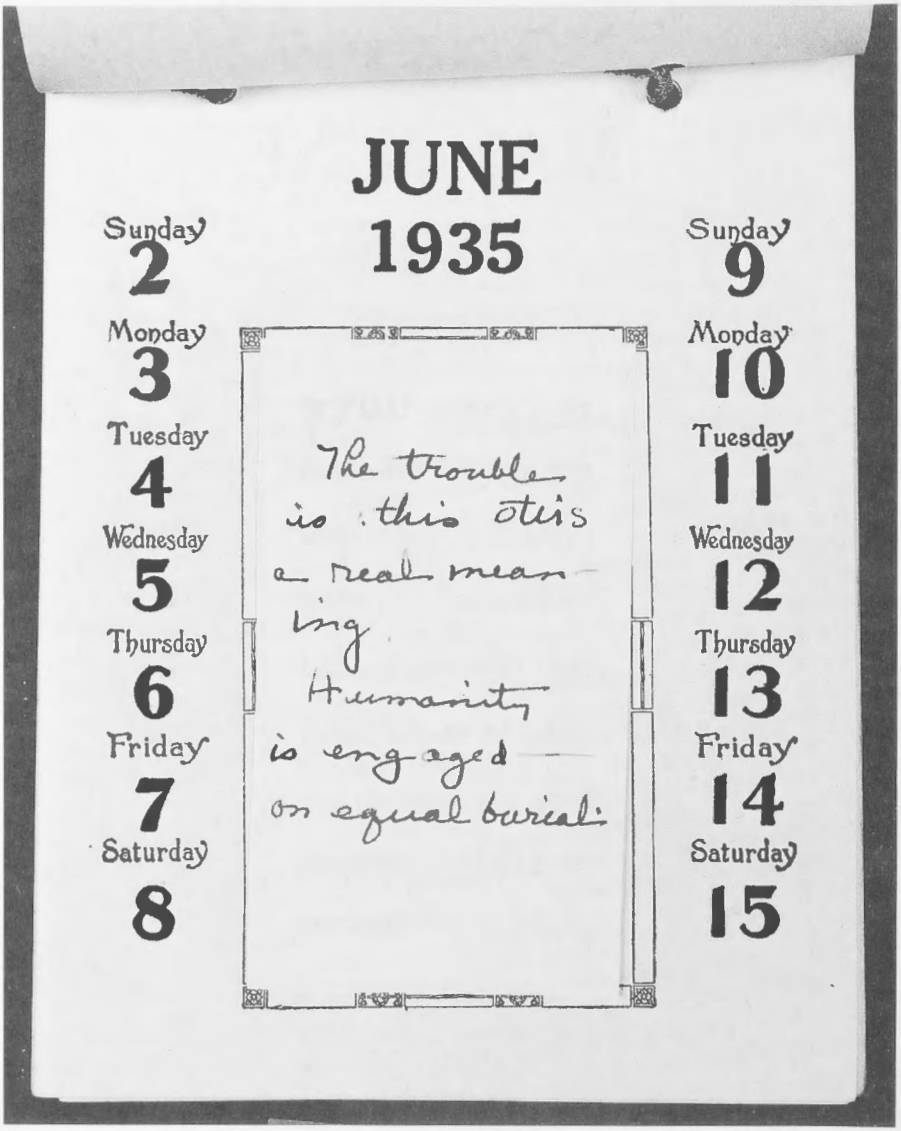
For so long one/has seen nothing/to be really anxious/about—it's always/just a flower in/the buttonhole,/but insipid con-/nections count/for a day—/tomorrow is/the fairest.



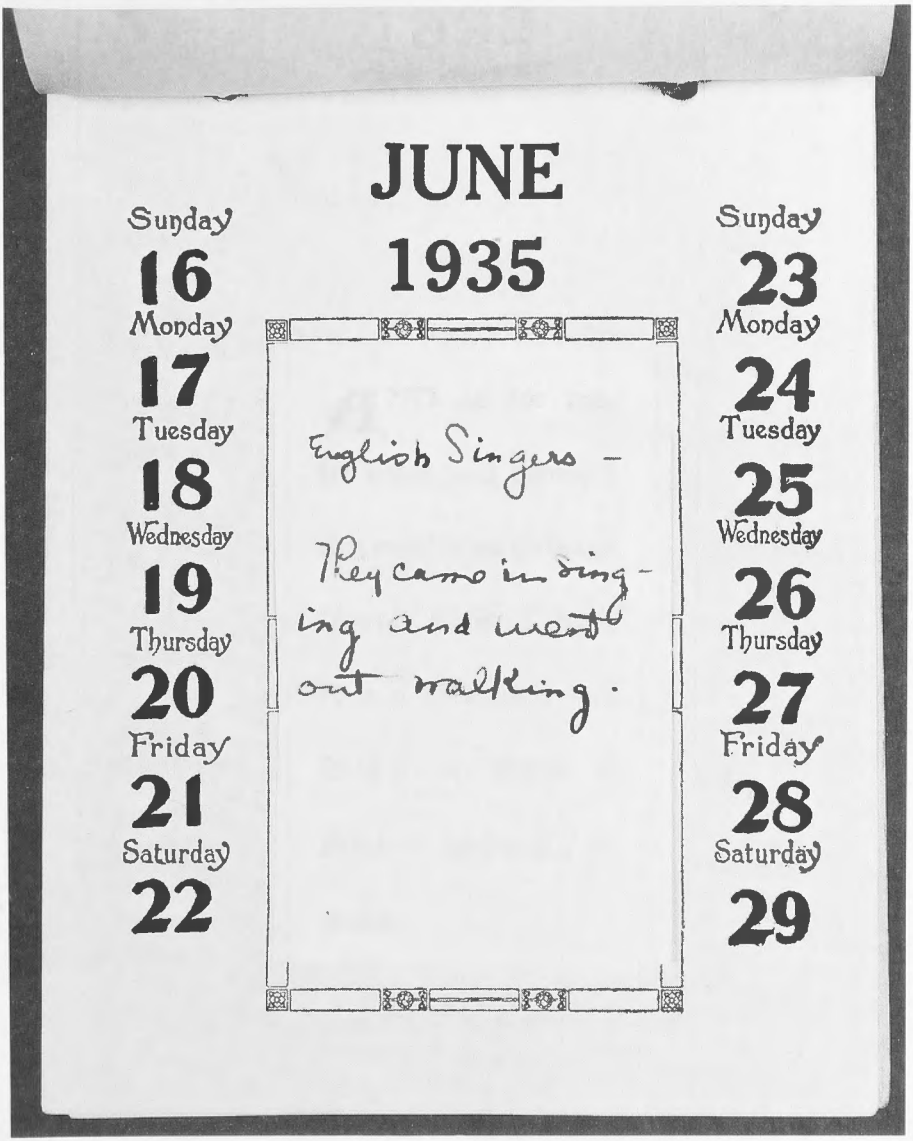
Don't worry/about the comma,/darling, nobody/ekes out a more/facile distend–/bathroom/luxury.



Dali's "Archeological/Reminiscence of/Millet's Angelus" /Strike a thrall./Bring an ear-/drum up to a/laughing order/at spittle point./For tipped aurals/and aluminum/casticulars.

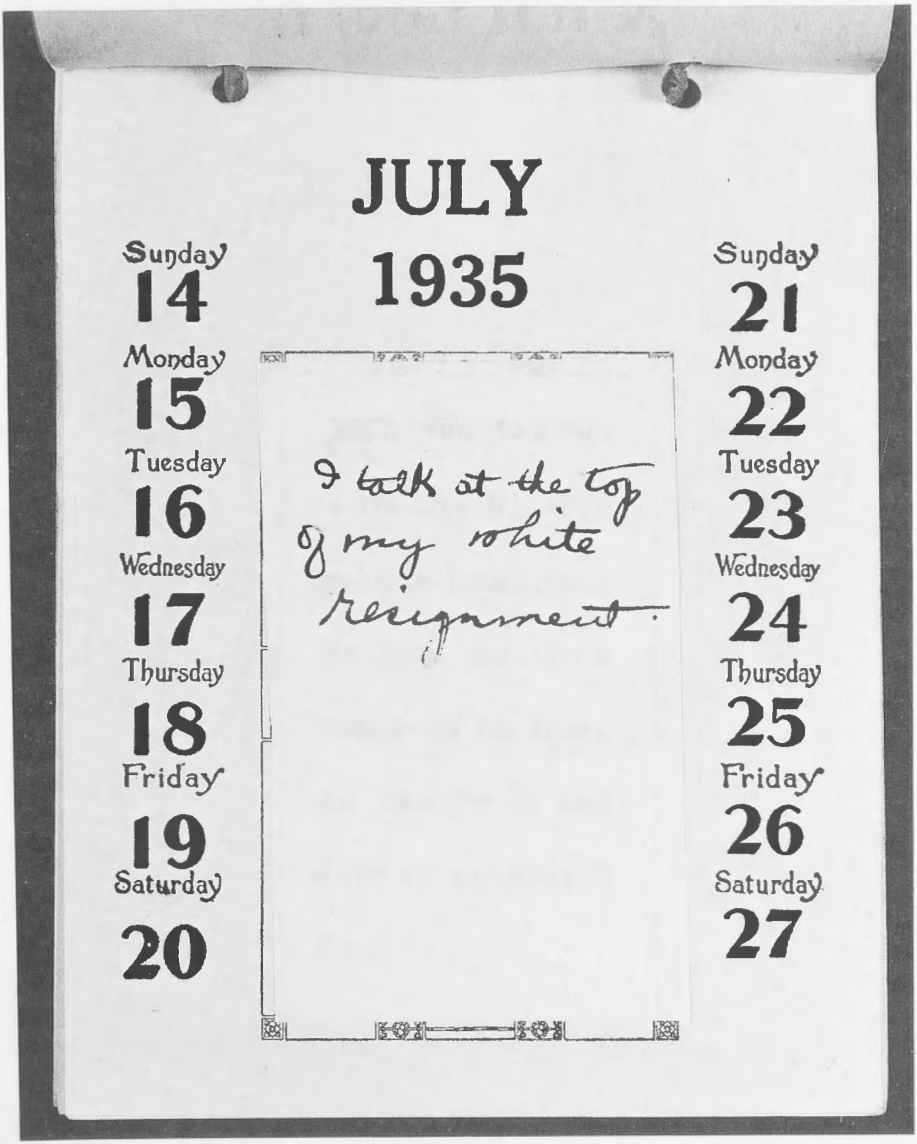


The trouble/is: this stirs/a real mean-/ing./ Humanity/is engaged—/on equal burial.



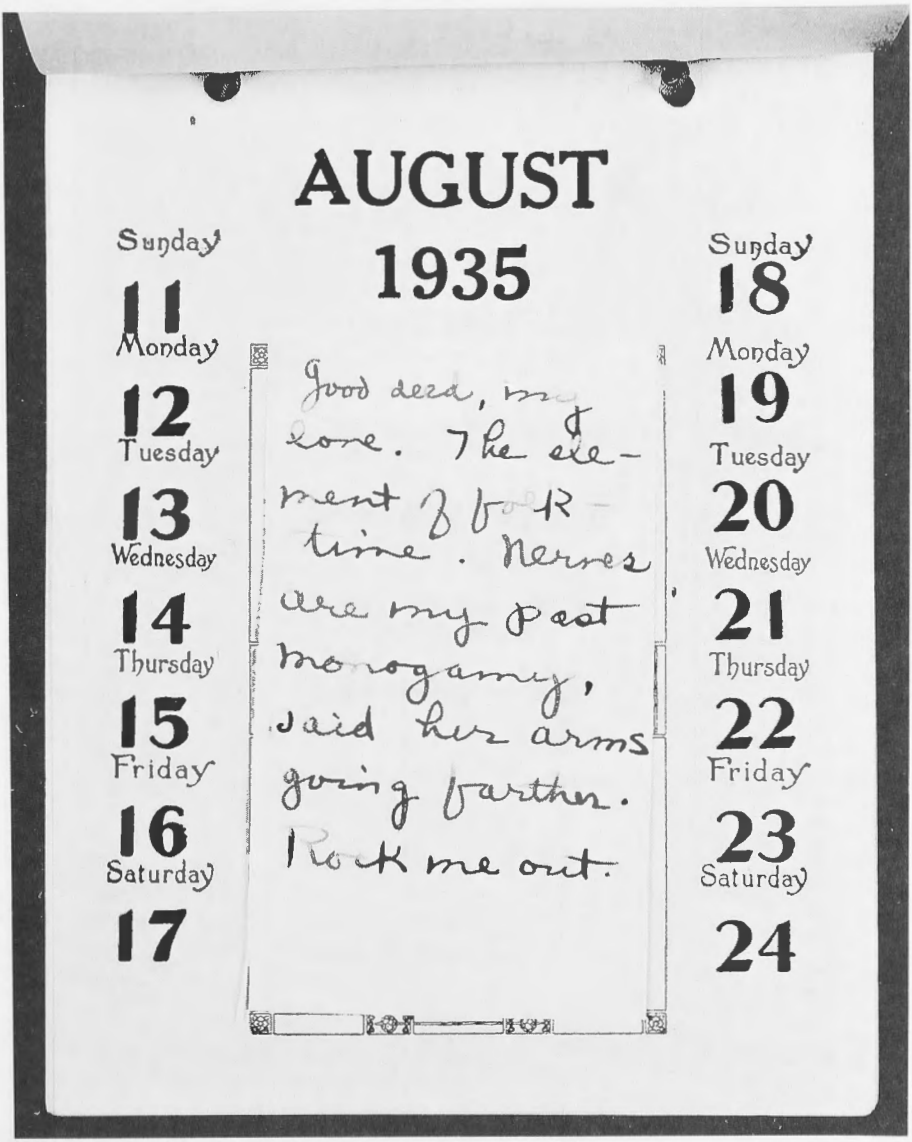
English Singers—/They came in sing-/ing and went/out walking.

The monster died/of his last breath,/ate a honey and/grew waxen.

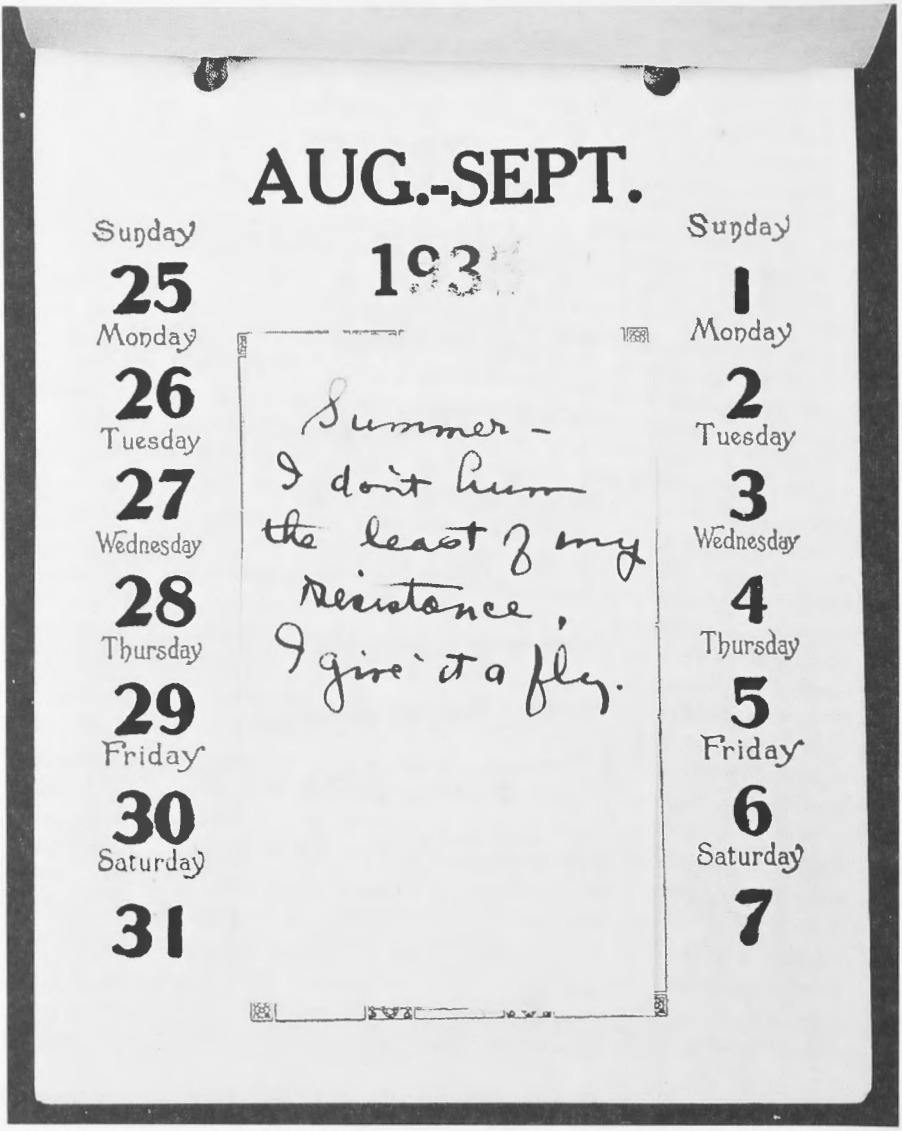


I talk at the top/of my white/resignment.

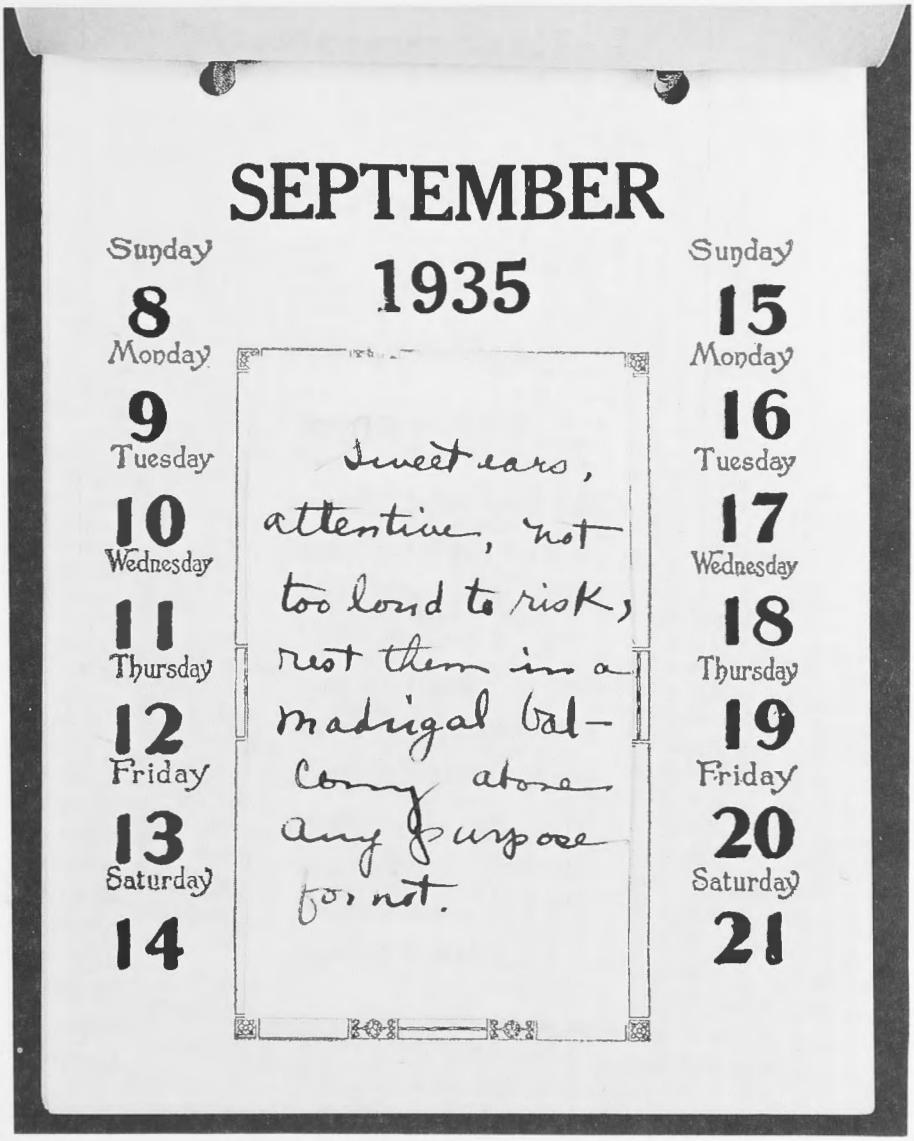
What a/white muffler/in a dark coat/will do for a/dull man.



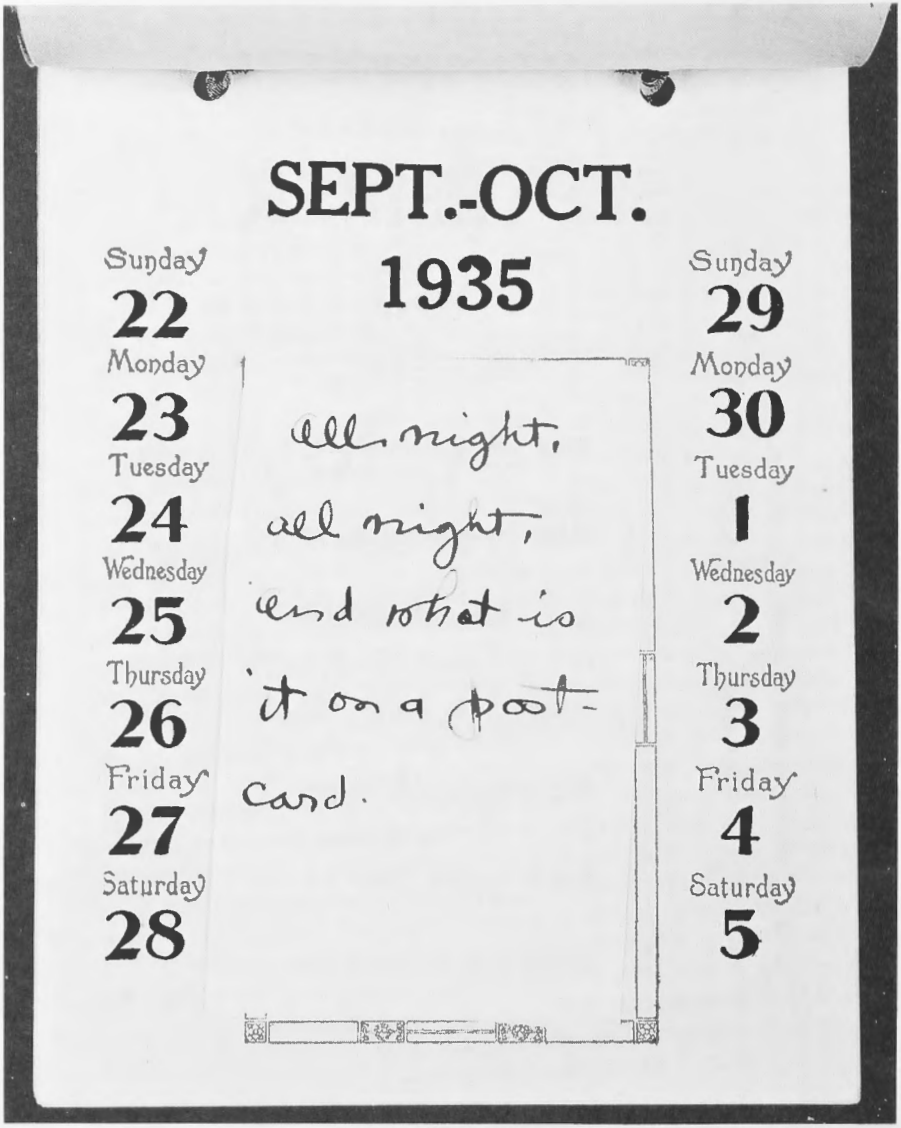
Good deed, my/love. The ele-/ment of folk-/time. Nerves/are my past /monogamy,/said her arms/going farther./Rock me out.



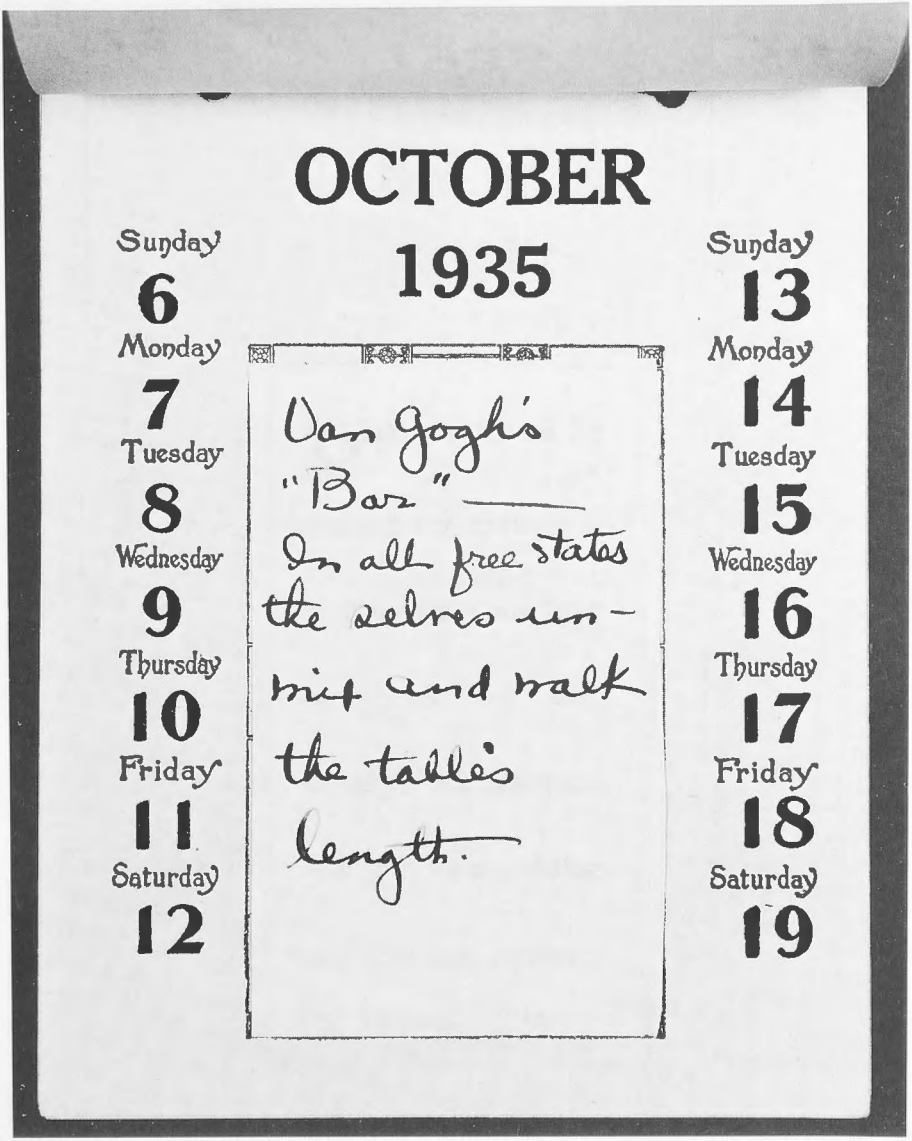
Summer–/I don't hum/the least of my/resistance,/I give it a fly.



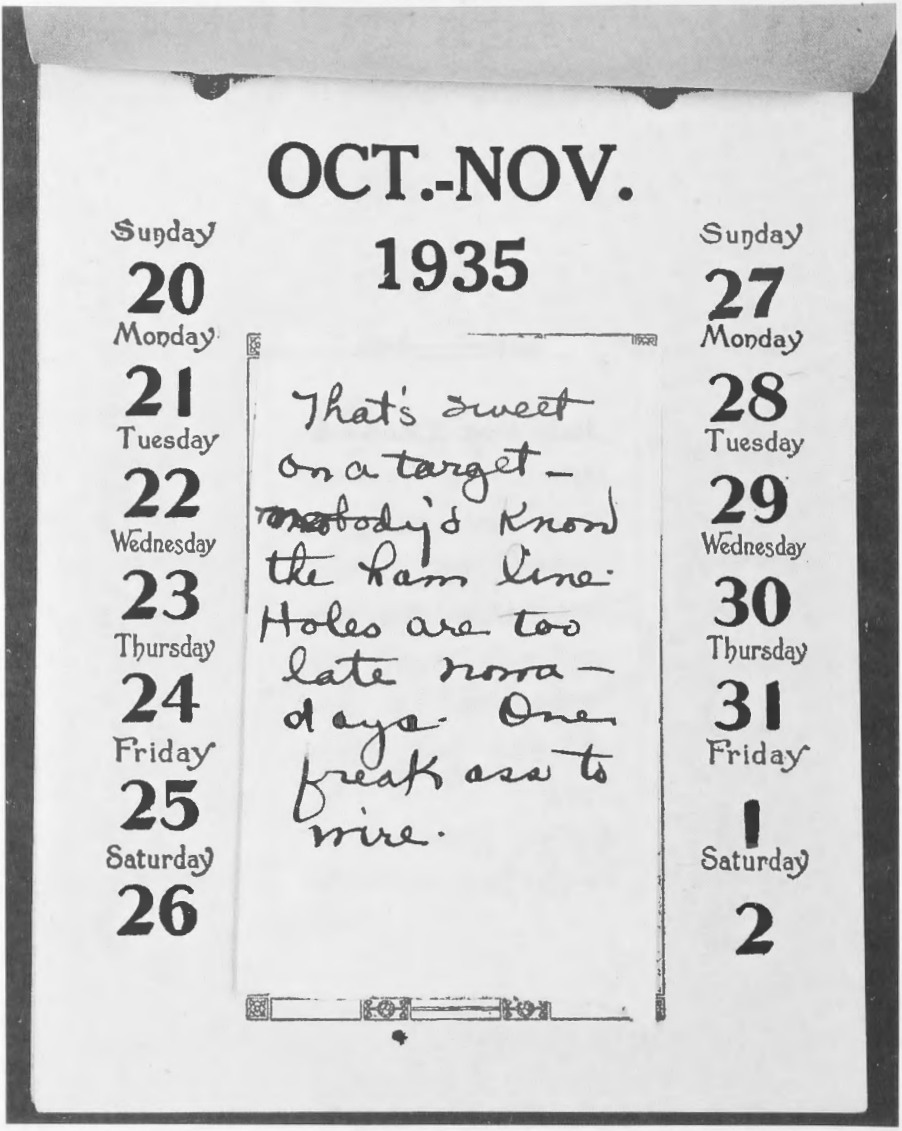
Sweet ears,/attentive, not/too loud to risk,/rest them in a/ madrigal bal-/cony above/any purpose/for not.



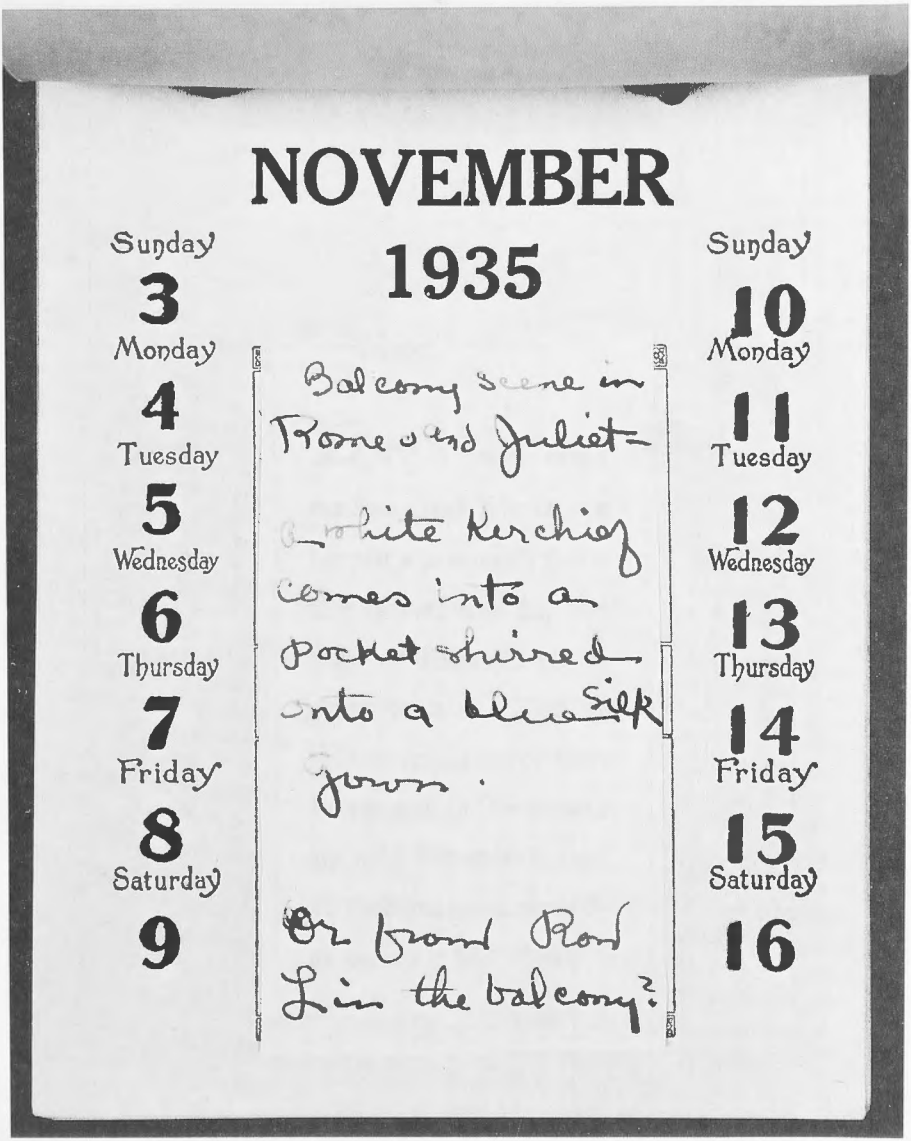
All night,/all night,/and what is/it on a post-/card.



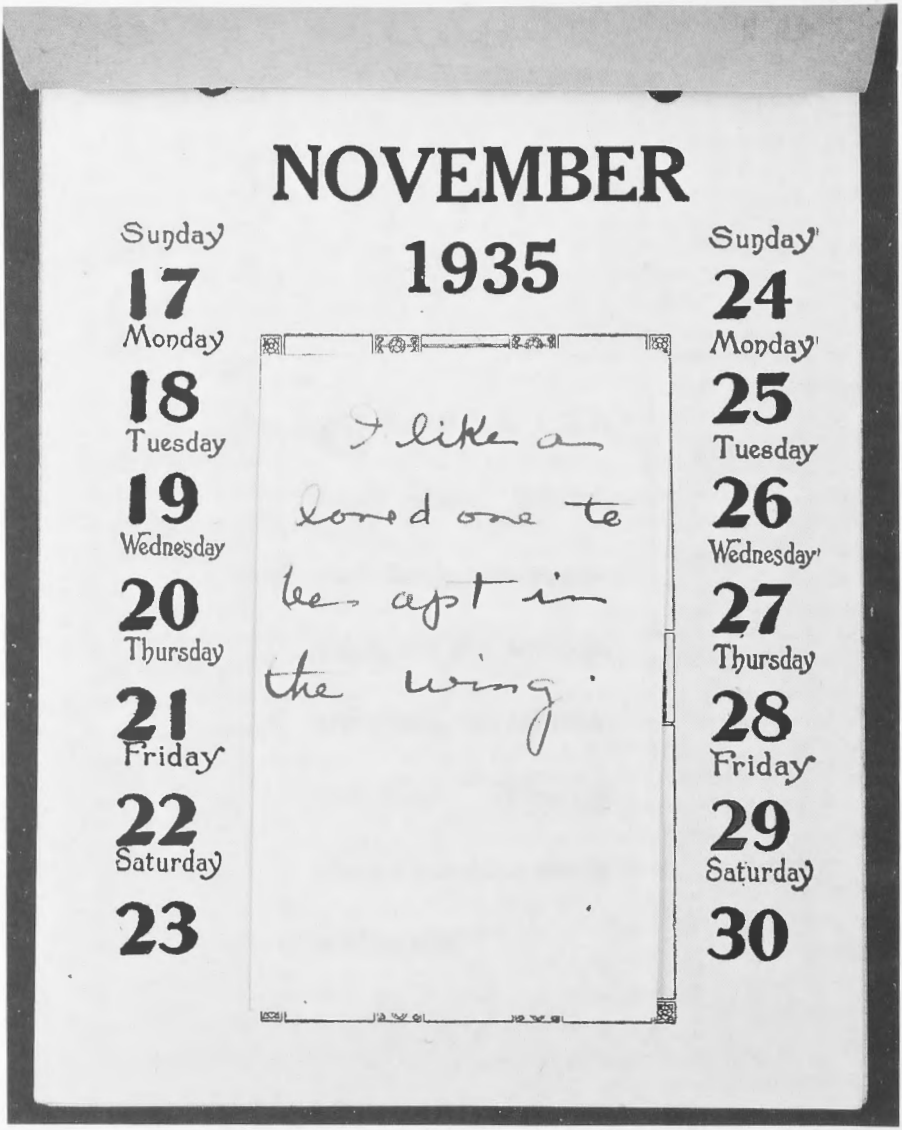
Van Gogh's/"Bar"—/ In all free states/the selves un-/mix and walk/the table's/length.



That's sweet/on a target—/nobody'd know/the ham line./Holes are too/late nowa-/days. One/freak ass to/wire.

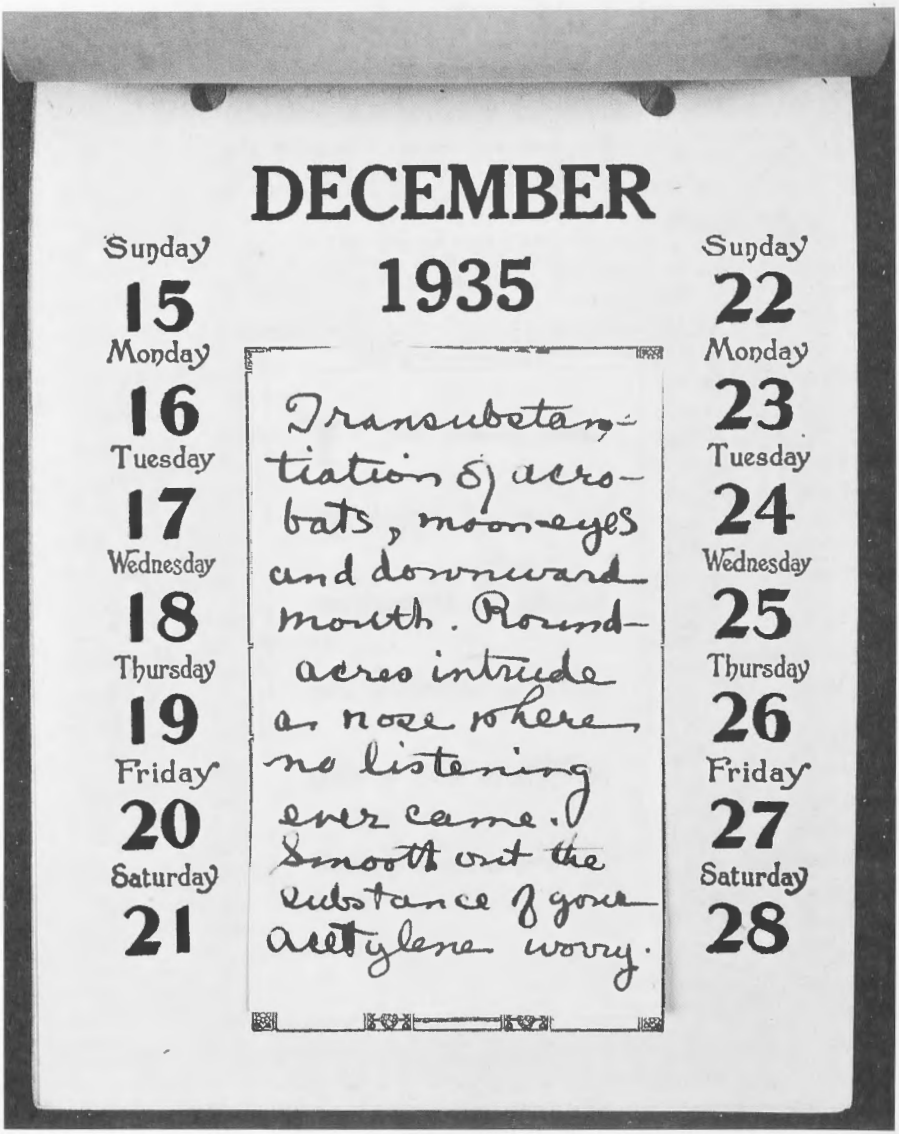


Balcony scene in/Romeo and Juliet—/a white kerchief/comes into a/pocket shirred/onto a blue silk/gown.// Or from Row/L in the balcony?

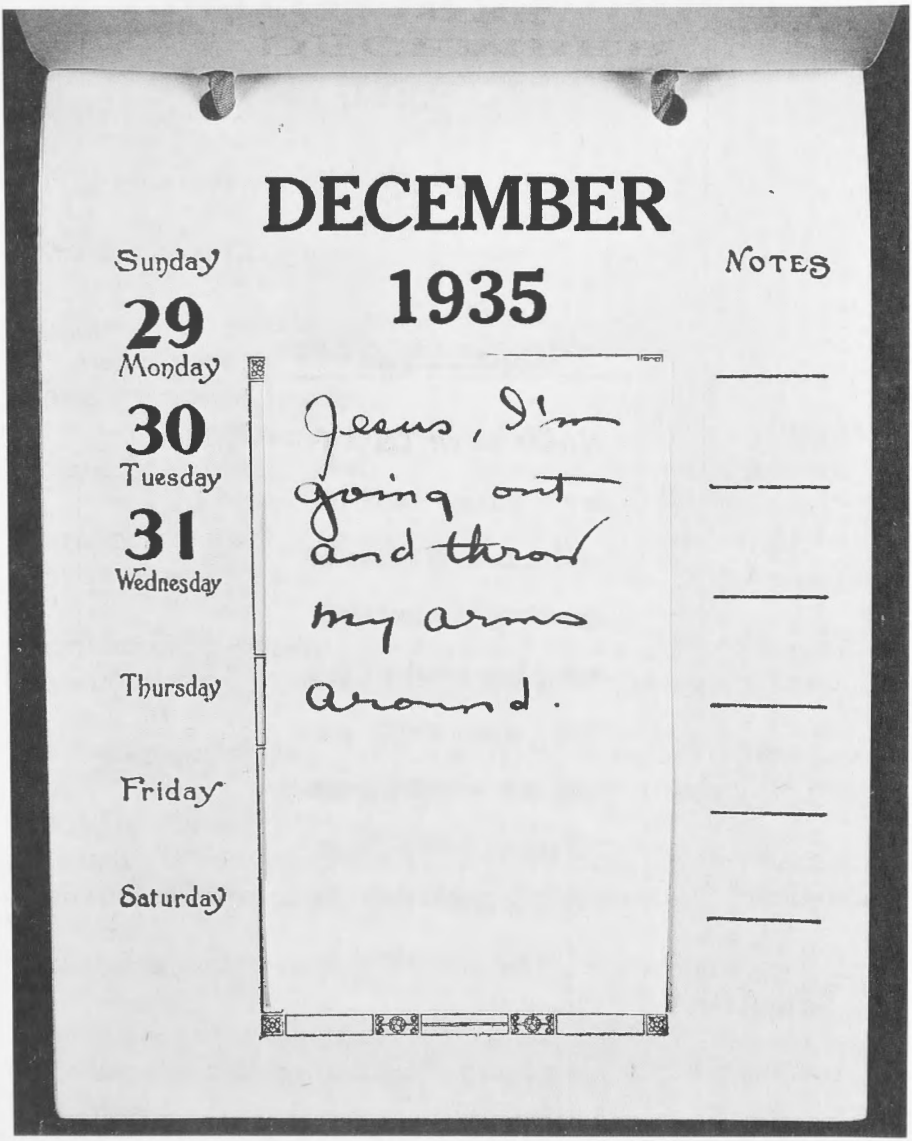


I like a/loved one to/be apt in/the wing.

Sweet ekes/of soft drips—/bathroom/luxuries.



Transubstan-/tiation of acro-/bats, moon-eyes/and downward/ mouth. Round-/acres intrude/a nose where/no listening/ever came./Smooth out the/substance of your/acetylene worry.



Jesus, I'm/going out/and throw/my arms/around.

MARJORIE WELISH

TWO POEMS

THIS NEAR THAT

Arresting exteriors to remain alike and at eye level,
even as interiors are skeptical

or defective relative for use as a reservoir,
aqueduct or kiosk.

"A small simple sheltering or enclosing structure."
A locale requiring a lid is logically incomplete.

A definition such that description lifts collegiate practice—
"and occurring in multiples" readily modular

if verbally reconfigured, may be reconfigured
as follows: "a structural reduction in answer to Tatlin."

Across a wall is a something
Something designates a wall.

"Something having a flat bottom and four upright sides" is a
[delegate
of sets of descriptions. Our professed subject.

"THIS HIT THAT" AND THE LIKE

We are pointing to that, to make mention of the new world,
[ostensibly
Of the new world, ostensibly an answer to *Counter-corner*
[Relief.
"Not that one. *That* one." In plywood, very heavy evidence.

Box, public collection and box, crushed possibly when wet.
". . .visible universe which is not the basket," texts.
You see it whole, intractable: first phase of apprehension.

Pointing to "that there," we name it "bin" whose height
[brought about
disruption of the box by deepening the rationale.
"Five is a number while °five' is a numeral."

Translations of substance to "that there, that one"
"bounding line drawn about" the funerary basket in stone, a
[new objective.
As death, so "untitled." Name one

rainbow—unmistakably apparent stimulus.
We name it "bin," to speak of "five" in decline.
Can room be found? The founding of landscape.

"That is beautiful" in aluminum, confined, however to the
[face
that did not fit any system and so passes through his heart.
"Passing through his thin heart" is a reference to "pan."

Speaking of substance, we mention "thing" as a pseudo-
[concept.
Read "this" as "recurrence of this" in this landscape of
[facsimile
and column. In some system, landscape and chimera are
[interchangeable.

BENJAMIN HOLLANDER

from ȮNȮME

how

hold

the

lorgnon

Lt.

when

Ȯnȯme

holds

the

different

one:spyglass

One spyglass on the window tells you all you want to know Lt. is howdoesonedo the *anguish of perceivedness*, how does one do it like Mr. Bentham built it, sir, if you please, he did—*cruel*—through the conversation tubes little things listen in on which could pass for kind Being dom i nant onBeing *tant on* he was, sir, so much the one to build perception on the angle of the mirrors and we knew it...taunted us...to know how to do perception on the angle of the mirrors. So we did learn. So we

learn deeds to be police–that is right–and taunted right in turn. Why he saw. Why he saw we learn right who he was in the image of panopticon love. So no man, we found. So no man we found so much gnome work did as he did so much on and then some.... Man. Hid. Onerous other things, be said, he did onerous like a man who devours men (to go down) on some all day and then some–given go-passes–at night–he made the given go-passes–and may have there stamped ampersands on their skinned hands as one deed–he did, *cruel*, *schri*, to let one go do one deed the gnome work there outside his house. Be said. And you. And you. And You. Go. Do Deed. Goodbye. There House. Sir, if you please, why he saw we learn right by who he was where he hung in the octagonal brickhouse of *hard labour* which wanted another name to be given a chance, home–penitent, to be, a different name. He gave it–"penitent." To be kinder, he said, say "penitent," be, a different name. Go home. Be said. Be smart or be muscled–be akind. Have friends. By love's vision out of lock-up one comes first as a man with a rose into her home–who shapes his fist around it. On her. Skinned. And then some–deed. Give a locket. One does. As he did–her mind. Shrew her, be said. Sir, she, the other half, did too–*schri*, *cruel*. Why he saw her–*schri*, *cruel*. Why he saw we learn so much who he was to *cruel* one's taunted love to the ground fistgripped on the knees from above–where he hung. It was lantern. It was swung. It was swung with him hid in it to do by us as he did by them in the image of panopticon love's by vision exceeded the pinholes to see with him hid in them without being seen, to name with him hid in them without being named. From above. It was lantern. Our turn–in it. Why he saw to it we learn right no shame. In us. He did tool it–today, to do by us, today. Love's by vision. It is. He knew it–taunted us, to know the same. Hold True, Be Said, For The Common Informer builds on you...an argot. It was our turn–in argot. Lock-up. Sir, if you please, all you want to know by now is how does one do love's by vision and learn by deed to be police-us like us all alike so awed to silence too–we need it. Passes. We needed passes–why rumour passes. One does move around us sir–and then some, deed. See. Sir, if you please, he did: the rule. He did: the rule governs cadres. The rule governs care. The rule *governs equally upon their knees*–to influence.

Cadres. He did tool it—influence—on some and then some rumour passes taunted heard ones signed for kind ones. Cadres. *Tant s'en faut* . He did sign them. He did sign them with the tool and then took some care and then some deed of his *infra* shone—see *infra*. Argot. We saw it, argot: the common informer, one cell phone in a pocket corner. On her. And then some—deed. Go on. Listen, be said, through the teeth some deed of his *infra* shone—see *infra*. Be said. Be smart or be muscled. Be akind to name without being named, in argot. Lock-up. Go on. Be said. There is always someone smarter than you in the head, in argot. You know it—the guard said it: when the dark could almost make you blind—he said it, you know: how you go here depends on how you are Being—well at the same time—dom i nant onBeing *tant on sans-soi*

(who saw it—outlast)

be low
the law
"go on," Lt.
"why go ahead," Lt.
akind

Ónome

codes

a different one:

"why pass"

BARBARA GUEST

(ROCKS ON A PLATTER)

I

Literature:

Ideas. As they find themselves. In the trees?
To choose a century they are prepared to inhabit. Dreams are
[set by
typography. A companionship with crewlessness –
[shivering fleece –
voyaging. Ship
shoal rocks

to approach this land raving!

Rocks, platter, words, words ...

mammoth teeth.

* * *

Mobility interseamed with print: "a small car beside the porch
[and wind
with a harsh caress ..." another STORY BEGINS:

A DONKEY DRAWS A CART TO THE FURNACE AND
THE CHILDREN PRESS AROUND THEIR SMALL TEETH
GLOWING.

"I heard the wolf".

* * *

It had been a vagabond voyage and the entrepreneur was fatigued, yet held up his head inflamed with "LITERATURE, the ABSURD." Ideas dropped off vines and into his mouth. An idea fell off a SECULAR vine roaming his head: BAKED APPLES!

Among his listeners, and a waterer of his vines, was a beautiful girl who hand-typed A BOOK CALLED, "BAKED APPLES." THESE STORIES "MELT IN THE MOUTH," the critics said.

THE KING READ HER STORIES, *BAKED APPLES 100,*
AND GAVE HER A GROVE OF APPLE TREES.
THE KITCHEN MAIDS, who wrote JONQUIL TALES, asked THE KING TO PLANT JONQUILS. THE KING replied HARSHLY, "I prefer BAKED APPLES."

THE TEARFUL KITCHEN MAIDS CLOSED THEIR KITCHEN AND OPENED A JONQUIL STORE IN BUDAPEST WITH YELLOW DOORS, and GREEN CEILINGS THAT VERY SOON APPEARED IN A FILM "THE BRIGHTENING OF BUDAPEST."

(The King, who liked the film, donated 25 white Palace chairs.)

* * * *

Passivity ...

pollen indoctrinated AND fragrance.

She digs with her fingernails into the earth while speaking [and

weeping. Her face is also

introduced into the story:

a fragrant narration.

"ASTOUNDING BEING ALIVE!"

* * * *

Pockets jingle highly responsive place in the shelter
of those rocks at last the jingle of your pockets

HEARD ON THE PAGE.

* * * *

... in its contiguous
treatment of time, literature:

is inclined to divorce
the uninhibited aroma of BEAUTY, OR
SPECTACULAR LEAP

suspicious
of fragmentation,

or the *sweet reproach of invisibility.*

* * * * *

Tradition

Tantamount to theory

treacles
of tender truckland

near Trebizond.

TRIUMPHS.

A TREMENDOUS TUNE-UP. ORTHODOXY.
tremendous tune-up

tra- la-la.

* * * *

Wet earth disinters itself.

With aplomb

bestows,

"The Kiss Behind the Counter."

* * * *

Wet earth disinters itself.
With aplomb
bestows,
"The Kiss Behind the Counter."

* * * *

Implacable poet.

II

Shattered Rocks

hid in the rock?
Deft, vehement. Amulet cast from the pocket.

And wind over red-tiled roof and we grow closer
to the moss of subjectivity guarding an iron basin
limed, mellowing ... old stars.

Rays modern rays,
modernly, so be it.

Noise of the shattering!

Behooved us to welcome tonality,

or succumb to the theme of inharmony ...

"where we once were."

* * *

Fiction and Complice

torment the mineral kingdom,

feathering the page
in the merit of feather.

Of brokeness–

brokeness resembles
evasion (although not separate), and
with a coat of arms,

'afloat with the telling.'

DALE PENDELL

AMṚTA: THE NEUROPHARMACOLOGY OF NIRVANA

Awash in chemicals: peptides and alkaloids, hormones and enzymes, pheromones, sugars and fatty acids. Tiny neurotransmitters: nitric oxide, hydrogen sulfide, and their big buddies: phenethylamines—dopamine and epinephrine; tryptamines-serotonin and melatonin.

Feedback loops and regulators, intricate biosynthetic pathways cross-linked and interwoven, like complex food-chains in a tropical forest.

Or maybe a Precambrian sea.

Which one is us? Are endorphins compassionate, adrenaline aggressive?

We tend to emphasize the brain as the center of consciousness, imagine it to be a computer full of wires, but Aristotle was not incorrect when he recognized that the brain was a secretory gland.

All in solution. Ions dissolved in synaptic fluid,
passing through membranes—
neurotransmitters binding to receptors,
electronic keys probing macromolecular locks,

There are dozens of receptor types and subtypes known. Receptors occur throughout the body, not just in the brain. There are serotonin receptors on blood platelets—the immune system like a second, decentralized brain, distinguishing "self" and "other."

The Discriminating Wisdom.

And the central nervous system is mirrored in the digestive tract: the "enteric" nervous system—one hundred million neurons embedded in the lining of the esophagus, stomach, and intestines, complete with neurotransmitters, synapses, and the ability to learn.

Cause or effect, hard to say: mood shifts change the chemistry, changing the chemistry alters mood.

We reflect the environment, permeable and penetrating, an analog-coded map. The protocol, deep down somewhere, perhaps wave equations, but the language is molecular: neurotransmitters are the lexicon, metabolic pathways the grammar.

> *Who speaks this language?*
> *We sit. Laugh. Sing.*
> *We dream.*

################

Many neurotransmitters are of ancient lineage. Some of the same molecules are found in mammals and reptiles, insects and mollusks. No reason to throw out a good idea.

Some of them are also found in plants. Mostly though, like large pharmaceutical firms, plants synthesize analogs: a patented chemical that has the same functionality as its type. As plant-insect relationships are often characterized by strife as well as by love, many of these chemicals, the alkaloids especially, are poisons, usually insect poisons. They fit into the plugs and gears of some finely tuned invertebrate biosystem and monkey-wrench it.

Some plant poisons mimic neurotransmitters. And since the nervous system tends to be conservative, compared with other biological systems, these plant poisons can also mimic human neurotransmitters, or interact with human consciousness in some other way.

This is a generalization, of course. Nobody knows for sure what the plants are up to. Sometimes they spend a significant amount of their energy and resources budget on synthesizing a chemical that serves no known purpose. For the plant, anyway. For human beings, the effects of the substance can be marvelous, divine.

> *Thus bhang, Cannabis sativa, is said to have sprung up where Shiva spilled a few drips of Amrita, or Ambrosia, the heavenly drink of the gods. Other sacred plants, like the mushrooms, Psilocybe spp., and the peyote cactus, Lophophora, are considered deific by their peoples: the gift of God, or indeed, the actual body of God.*

Sacred plants have been our companions since the Paleolithic. In those times, the scientists and healers, the poets, and prophets, learned how to use these plants, and discovered deeper layers to the world, beyond its usual appearance. That what seems is not necessarily what is.

Possibly they discovered language. Certainly they discovered animism. They saw that the earth was alive, and that everything that happened or existed was connected to everything else. They discovered that sickness lay within, that the Self had an inner structure where dramatic scenes were enacted: theater, masks. That sometimes a person got lost while passing through this realm, so was a confused type of person, or lost something there, like a shadow, or playfully tried on one of the masks and forgot to take it off, and got stuck in it.

> *Some of them saw all the way to the core: these were the Paleolithic Buddhas.*

The Paleolithic plant-teaching lineage and its descendants is still alive and being practiced by many native peoples, and by a few religious sects in India and Africa. In the West, plant religions were severely persecuted, generally to extinction. A few pockets have survived, such as *Amanita muscaria* use by certain groups of rural Catalonians.

################

Buddhism, with a few possible exceptions, has mostly abandoned the use of natural substances in yogic practice, substituting instead a variety of artificial techniques.[1]

> *Traces remain, hemp seeds in tantric rituals.*

The reasons for the rejection of psychoactive plants may well be political as much as spiritual/practical. Buddhism directly challenged the hegemony of the soma priests as spiritual and ritual authorities, and whether soma was originally the fly agaric mushroom (Amanita muscaria), as Gordon Wasson believed, Syrian rue (Peganum harmala), as David Flattery suggested, or Psilocybe cubensis, ergotized barley or rye, marijuana (Cannabis sativa), or some other plant, its consciousness-altering powers are well documented, and its use was central to the Vedic religion that formed the cultural and religious milieu from which Buddhism sprang.[2]

It also seems likely that the rejection of psychoactive plants was a rejection of shamanism, and because many or most of the plant doctors were probably women, thus a rejection of women as spiritual teachers. It is not clear which of the two concerns was most salient.[3]

It is clear, though, that certain classes of psychoactive plants were once much more utilized by yogic practitioners, in India and throughout the world. More, it is clear that psychoactive plants (or animals!) have been a part of, or at the very center of, religious practice in the majority of prehistoric cultures, though I don't agree with those who say that psychoactive plants are the *only* possible origin of religion (death, to cite just one alternative, is another suitable candidate).

##########

Traces remain, metaphors remain.

Early Buddhist psalms speak of *asava,* the "deadly drugs." The arhat is one who has freed himself from the four *asavas:* desire, speculation, ignorance, and rebirth (lust for life).

> *Asava:*
> *an extract or secretion of a tree or flower;*
> *an outflow, flowing, or emission;*
> *attention or desire, the soul,*
> *directed outwards toward an object—*
> *thus, infirmity, a drug, or poison.*

Images remain: Amitabha is called *amritaraja,* the Nectar-King.

> *Amrita. Ambrosia.*
> *The divine nectar. The Drink of Immortality.*

Amrita is closely connected to soma. The Tibetan translation for *amṛta* is *dutsi.* In the Buddhist version of the myth about churning the ocean to obtain ambrosia, Vajrapani turns black after drinking Rahu's *dutsi*-laden urine, as Shiva turns blue in the Hindu version.

In the dharani for feeding the hungry ghosts, we chant

> *Adoration to Kanroo the Tathagata.*

Kanroo: ambrosia. *Kan* plus *Lou,* bliss-bestowing nectar.

Buddha is the poison for poison. The Buddha-dharma is the Ambrosial Drum.

Nirvana is the *Nectar City,* the entrance is the Ambrosial Gate.

Amrta:
the deathless, the unborn.
A sea of neurotransmitters. What is the solute?

################

But Buddhist yoga has not entirely abandoned chemical aids in the quest for Realization. William McNiell, in *The Rise of the West,* states that Indian religiosity, and thence that of Christianity, Islam, and Chinese Buddhism, is founded and sustained by insights triggered by oxygen starvation.

A facile reduction, but perhaps with a pointer: shallow breathing, sometimes extremely shallow breathing, is indeed a salient feature of deep meditation. (Though it seems more likely that the carbon dioxide level, more than that of the dissolved oxygen, would have the more profound pharmacological activity. Two of the therapeutic indications for carbon dioxide are "negativism" and "melancholia.")

Still, as Zen students know, the best technique is no guarantor of insight. You can enter a high, altered state of consciousness and go right on sleeping. Maybe the point is not to get high, but to come down.

But isn't that a high?

################

Hui Neng was just chopping wood, nothing special.
Always good to remember that.

Still, it is the sesshin, the intense yogic training period, that is the context for most of our stories of ***kensho,*** Realization.

An altered state of consciousness.

Days of sitting. Pain in the legs. Not quite "sensory deprivation," but sustained, practiced focus and stillness. Bound to change one's neurochemistry: endorphins at least, and probably a lot more. And the

change is often most apparent after leaving sesshin, re-entering the world and encountering familiar settings.

The "post-sesshin high."

We can characterize it phenomenologically, as we can other drugs.

Effects: mental clarity; heightened empathic assessment of other people; strengthening of intuitive powers; possible diminishment of certain analytical syllogistic skills. High pain threshold.

Or, some parts like a mild opium high, perhaps combined with the alertness of cocaine (again, small dose); or like half a tab of MDMA without the jaw clenching. Or like a full tab of MDMA without the jaw clenching. And some playfulness, like, well,

A spring morning. Saturday morning.
The birds! So many birds
singing.

Duration: Lasts for 12 to 48 hours after leaving sesshin. Gradual tapering of effects. Mild crash, completely mitigated by sleep and more meditation.

But as with any high, you have to come down. Aitken Roshi often makes this point during his post-sesshin cautions.

The students are warned that they are in a highly sensitized and energized state. They are warned about getting involved in philosophical and intellectual discussions, about driving (timing is often altered), that, though the mind is awake and alert, the body is nonetheless tired, perhaps exhausted, and will need rest. And, of course, to avoid dissipating the experience by talking about it too much.

It's not uncommon for sangha members who did not participate in the sesshin to show up for the closing ceremony and the informal meal, visiting, and cleanup that follows, just to feel the "energy" ("contact high," we used to call that).

################

"You have to come down."

An altered state of consciousness acutely suited to one task, not necessarily optimal or even appropriate to others.

Are we agreed here? Are we all agreed on this point?

Altered state/nothing special.
Altered from what?
Altered implies a norm, an unaltered state of consciousness.

The matter of sobriety.

> *Hard to see, though, how an altered state of consciousness is necessary to perceive the truth of suffering.*

################

The term "drugs" won't do: which drugs? Neither will "sobriety." Sobriety from what? Alcohol sober, but high on cannabis? Or cannabis, alcohol, and caffeine sober but under the influence of cocaine?[4]

Or maybe nicotine sober, Valium sober, and television sober, yet totally mad with love and jealousy.

Or drunk with rationality. Sober with attachment.

"Drugs, as a general term, is an obfuscation of the War on Drugs. We hear the phrase "alcohol and drugs, as if alcohol were not a drug, and as if by drugs we all know what is being talked about. Addiction is an issue with tobacco, alcohol, and the opiates, but is not at all a property of the entheogens. Addiction to alcohol, a cellular poison, is characterized by physical and mental deterioration that is virtually absent in opiate addiction. Tobacco kills nearly half a million Americans each year, but there are no recorded deaths from marijuana. Each of these plants and substances has distinct properties, promises, and dangers. All that is served by lumping a group of them together is a government program of spiritual and political oppression aimed at cutting off all dialogue.

The War on Drugs is in essence a religious war. That is why drug offenders frequently get longer prison sentences than violent criminals. A drug user is worse than a criminal—no punishment is too severe, because drug users are heretics.

Our interest here is in a special class of psychoactive plants and drugs that have acquired spiritual reputations: *Psilocybe* mushrooms, peyote, ayahuasca, and LSD. They are even called *entheogens,* "manifesting-god-within," akin to the enthusiasm of the Greek desert fathers. Ecstasy.[5]

##########

Meditation as a standard, a calibrating, measuring device. Meditation and koan practice as a control to assess different classes of psychotropic plants and substances.

Tea, Bodhidharma's gift, the old Barbarian's own poison, his very eyelids given for the benefit of sentient beings in their quest for realization. Some argue that while tea is beneficial, coffee is disruptive. Some find that even tea is disturbing, strengthening the monkey more than the watcher.

Some say that MDMA is an excellent catalyst for the first day of sesshin.

> *Ahhh, what about guyusa leaves,*
> *so low in tannins, for a predawn tea?*
> *What about a good chew of khat,*
> *to subdue the drowsiness*
> *of a hot afternoon?*

The *Hevajra Tantra* mentions camphor as being drunk in certain rituals to gain *siddhi.* In small doses, camphor is a stimulant. But in large doses, administered intravenously, camphor was used to induce convulsions in mental patients, before it was replaced with electricity. Camphor is an isomer of thujone, the active oil in wormwood, *Artemisia absinthium.*

Trungpa singled out marijuana as being detrimental to meditation: saying that it mimicked meditation—and forbade its use and presence. Almost everyone finds LSD much too powerful and overwhelming to be useful in practice.

> *Field Report, a poet and Rinzai practitioner.*
>
> *I took some LSD during a sesshin while I was in Japan. It was too much, too exaggerated. Everything was too perfect and meaningful. The timing and sound of the*

bells had cosmic significance. The monks were so beautiful that I wanted to cry. Everything was so numinous.

[Did you get a koan answer?]

Oh yes. I found a great, perfect answer.

[Did you go to dokusan?]

Yes.

[And. . .?]

Oh, it was wrong, of course. I mean I had a great, perfect answer, but it wasn't the point of the koan at all.

################

The salient feature of entheogens in American Buddhism at present is memorial: that many Americans were attracted to Buddhism in the first place because of psychedelic revelations. If, as some pedants claim, such experiences are not "genuine," their persistence is remarkable indeed.

Very few dedicated students seem interested in using psychedelics WITHIN the context of the Buddha-way, but even fewer recant the importance or significance of their previous experiences. Most of them claim that the Buddha-way is a natural extension or progression of their psychedelic experiences. Many leave open the possibility of renewing their acquaintance with entheogenic plants or substances in the future.

Maybe its not that visionary plants and drugs are useful for Zen training, but that Zen training is excellent preparation for using psychedelic drugs.

No amount of meditation is going to give you an LSD experience.

################

Is there something MISSING, a barren area in Buddhism, that these sacred plants and medicines address?

We had all walked down to the beach. It seemed like everyone was talking at once. Tim was crying and laughing at the same time, came over and started hugging me.

"All this time, my whole life, I've been embarrassed about my teeth-that's all it was—so I wouldn't smile—just because of my teeth I've been stopping myself from smiling."

This promise, this chance, that through insight, revelation, through discovered/recovered facility, that obstacles be dissolved and the ego be strengthened and healed.

Crying and laughing, hugging.

At any point on this continuum, the matter of the fifth precept may be addressed.

##########

Surāmeraya-majjapa-mādahānā veramanīsikkhāpadaṁ-
[samādiyāmi

"I undertake the training rule to abstain from fermented and distilled intoxicants which are the basis for heedlessness."[6]

Surā refers to spiritous, flavored liquors, though it is not clear that this has always specifically meant distilled alcoholic beverages, as five kinds of *surā* are mentioned in the *Veda. Meraya* refers to any sort of fermented beverage; Rhys-David says that there were five kinds. *Majja* is an intoxicant, from a very ancient Indo-European root with cognates that include words for mead, madness, passion, and rejoicing. Rhys-David suggests "indolence" for *pamada* instead of "heedlessness."

The most literal interpretation of the precept is clearly directed against alcohol, and, more specifically, against its deleterious effects on mindfulness and morality. Opium, at the time of the *Vinaya* was almost certainly viewed purely as a medicine and not as an intoxicant. The absence of *bhang* from the precept, however, may be significant, because hemp was indeed used in some yogic practices, and has left traces in both Hindu and Buddhist tantra.

Bhikkhu Bodhi stresses the heedlessness that arises from intoxication as the point of the precept.

> *Under the influence of intoxicants a man who might otherwise be restrained can lose self-control, become heedless, and engage in killing, stealing, adultery, and lying. Abstinence from intoxicants is prescribed on the grounds that it is essential to the self-protection of the individual and for the well-being of family and society. The precept thus prevents the misfortunes that result from the use of intoxicants: loss of wealth, quarrels and crimes, bodily disease, loss of reputation, shameless conduct, negligence, and madness.*
>
> *—Bhikkhu Bodhi, Going For Refuge;*

But we have to go further. We will not dally in the literal. The precept is about delusions.

> *But sobriety also deludes.*
> *If sobriety did not delude,*
> *there would be no Buddhists,*
> *no one lighting incense and chanting Kanzeon.*

The precept is about not muddying the waters.

But there is something muddy about many commentaries on the fifth precept, when "intoxicants" are glossed in a lump to "drugs." Characterizations such as "semiconscious euphoria," or "heedless loss of self-control," or "haze that clouds the mind" bear little affinity with the ecstatic epiphanies and insights of the psychedelic experience.

Still. Such ignorance should not limit our own investigations. We know something about delusion, and something about the seductive powers of Mara's beautiful daughters.

> *Self-nature is subtle and mysterious. In the realm of the intrinsically pure Dharma, not giving rise to delusion is called the Precept of Not Giving or Taking Drugs.*
>
> *—Bodhidharma*

################

Dogen is more karmic:

> *Drugs have not been brought into it. Don't bring them in.*

Which drugs? Bodhidharma's eyelids? Carbon dioxide volume?

In another sense the poisons were there from the beginning. Maybe they *are* the beginning: a grand hallucination of seeming. Of eyes, taste, touch, thought, and object of thought.

> *Birth, death, and dreaming:*
> *beta-carbolines shielding tryptamines,*
> *carbohydrates in a controlled burn.*
> *Rice as a powerful hallucinogen.*

################

Medicinal use of drugs is excepted from the precept.

We bless the rice and vegetables we eat at sesshin as "this good medicine." And supper is considered "medicine," not a meal at all—therefore not transgressing the rule that monks eat only twice a day.

> *Yun Men, teaching his community, said, "Medicine and disease subdue each other: the whole earth is medicine; what is your self?"*
>
> *—Blue Cliff Record, case 87*[7]

The earth comes forth to confirm the self: tonight's cold wind; a warm cup of soup.

Different diseases require different medicines.

> *But are we not ill? Dukkha?*
> *Are we not, like all conditioned and composite dharmas, [ill?*
> *And is not one of the greatest illnesses the frozen, reified belief in the ultimate nature of external objects?*
> *Or its converse?*

################

The question of entheogenic drugs more generally is the question of ecstatic visions. Divine madness. *Makyō.*

Makyō: the Path of Illusions; Path of Dreams. A feeling of great numinosity.

Makyō.

魔境

Ma, hemp-spirit, Mara, the devil in the phenomenal world. Makyō are visions that appear at certain stages of the meditation path.

> *A deep dream of participation in the Buddha Dharma.*
>
> *—Robert Aitken*[8]

The *Surangama Sutra* lists fifty types of makyō, ten for each of the five aggregates of form, receptiveness, conception, discrimination, and consciousness. The Buddha states that these visions are harmless, even excellent progressive stages, unless the practitioner believes that they signify complete attainment.

> *In this clear and penetrating state of your mind when it looks within, its light appears in all its purity and at midnight you will suddenly see in your dark room all sorts of apparitions as clearly as in broad daylight, with all the other objects usually there. This is the mind, in its subtlety, refining its clear perceptions which enables you to see distinctly in the dark. This temporary achievement does not mean you are a saint. If you do not regard it as such, it is an excellent progressive stage, but if you do you will give way to demons.*
>
> *—Surangama Sutra*[9]

##################

To poison poison, the Peacock Path. The way of transmutation.

The blue color of the peacock is the blue of Shiva, the blackness of Vajrapani: the color of the poison-drinker.

In jungles of poisonous plants strut the peacocks. . .[10]

The Bodhisattva of Makyo, the Poison Buddha, The Bodhisattva of Illusions: the buddha with 108,000 names who teaches and saves with illusion. Whose very name poisons preconceptions, who leaves us in a soup of dreams.

We know this path in our imaginations, or is it our memories? A path that includes ecstasy and ecstatic visions, the God of Ecstasy, Shiva, or maybe Dionysus: the Bodhisattva who gave us his very blood as a medicine for crippling inhibitions, that the true soul emerge.

Dionysus, by nature unrecognized, but surely present in the pantheon: a young god with the rank of bodhisattva.

Iconography: sometimes rides a panther, sometimes an ass. Androgynous. Usually with long hair. Associated with the thyrsus and tambourine, wears a garland of ivy leaves (a cure for drunkenness). God of music, poetry, song, and the theater. Dharani may include eating wild mushrooms, and raw flesh (emblematic of the food web and interdependence).

Associated with springtime, and an ecstatic state of consciousness often mistaken for madness, but more appropriately named Great Joy. Enthusiastic exuberance.

Wrathful aspect: hawk eating a ground squirrel; cat playing with a mouse, waiting, letting it revive and run in order to catch it again. Two schoolgirls catching fireflies, pulling the abdomens off and sticking them onto their arms and the backs of their hands, dancing and laughing, their jewelry aglow with green light.

Let a thousand schools flourish, the way of Buddhism is assimilation, not rejection. The Divine Madness school of Buddhism, watched over by the Bodhisattva Dionysus, who uses enthusiasm and ecstatic visions as devices. . .

And thus Bodhisattvas are likened to peacocks:
They live on delusions—those poisonous plants.
Transforming them into the essence of Practice,
They thrive in the jungle of everyday life.

Whatever is presented they always accept,
While destroying the poison of clinging desire.

—Dharmaraksita

##################

1. Jonathan Ott, in *The Age of Entheogens,* presents the above clarification of the usually inverted use of "natural" and "artificial."
2. Andrew Schelling, personal communication.
3. I find Dan Merkur's thesis that the Old Testament mana was an entheogenic substance, probably a mushroom, very convincing. ("Mana and the Showbread: A Psychoactive Sacrament in the Biblical Israel," paper delivered to the Psychoactive Sacraments conference, Menlo Park, Feb. 18, 1995.)

   "They kept part of it till morning, and it became full of maggots and stank." Exodus 16:19.

   And if "hoarfrost" refers to the peculiar ground ice that sometimes squeezes up through the dirt like toothpaste, as I have heard the term used, the case for mana being a hallucinogenic mushroom is strong indeed. The history of mana among the Hebrews parallels that of soma among the Aryans: the earliest references show that the plant was used by everyone; middle references that its use was restricted to priests; and lastly that its use disappears or is replaced by a ritualistic and pharmacologically inactive substitute.
4. See *On Drugs,* by David Lenson, for an excellent and penetrating critique on the use of the term "drugs" and the concept of sobriety in the War on Drugs.
5. Entheogens. A psychedelic plant or substance used in a spiritual setting, according to the Council for Spiritual Practices.

   "Entheogen" is being used to stress the spiritual and sacred aspects of drugs such as LSD and psilocybin. But there is something to be said for "hallucinogen." While these substances rarely induce what could technically be called hallucinations, aficionados regularly speak of the quality of the "visuals." It is not clear just what "visuals" per se have to do with "entheogenic" experience.
6. *Surāmeraya-majjapa-daṭṭhāna veramaṇī sikkhāpadamsamādiyāmi*

   Bhikkhu Bodhi, "Going for Refuge Taking the Precepts," *The Wheel,* No. 282/283/284.
7. Cleary, Thomas, and J. C. Cleary, tr. *The Blue Cliff Record,* 1992, Shambhala.
8. Robert Aitken, *Encouraging Words; Zen Buddhist Teachings for Western Students,* 1993, Pantheon.
9. Luk, Charles, tr. *The Surangama Sutra,* 1966, Rider, London.
10. *Dharmaraksita: Wheel of Sharp Weapons: A Mahayana Training of the Mind.* Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala.

JOSÉ LEZAMA LIMA

SIX POEMS
from THE FRAGMENTS DRAWN BY CHARM

(Tr. from the Spanish
by Roberto Tejada)

MOTHER

I saw the face of my mother again.
It was a night that seemed to have severed
night from sleep.
The night drew on or halted,
a cutting knife or a hurricane gust,
but the dream didn't head for its night.
I felt as if everything weighed upward,
you spoke there, almost murmuring,
in the ear of some tiny crab,
alright, I know this because I saw her smile
as if wanting to approach and offer me
the little creature,
to watch its amusing crawl
or to plunge it in hot flour.
The ripe corncob like a baby tooth,
in a drawer teeming with silver-plated ants.
The simile of the drawer like a snake,
the size of an arm, a snake rendering slivers
out of the folded length of its tongue, the one
where old watches are kept, the hilarious
frightful talking drawer.
Groping along the door frame,
to begin to feel, covering my eyes,
though eventually motionless,
that what remained was heavier,
with the lightness of what the rain weighs
or the harp's venetian blinds.

The courtyard was attended
by the entire moon, along with the other invited meteors.
The itinerary of their habit was auspicious and magical.
I watched the door,
but the rest of her body remained subtracted,
like someone who begins to speak,
who laughs again
but who, lingering between the door
and whatever else remains,
seems to have left and then returns.
What's left is God maybe,
minus myself maybe,
maybe the solar scraping
within which, astride, maybe the self.
At my side, the other body
breathing with eyes
adhered to the rock of this spherical emptiness.
It all began to vanish
into a whirling metal with borders
assaulted by the brevity of flames,
into the steam rising from a tiny
cup of morning coffee,
into locks of hair.

May & 1971

ELOÍSA LEZAMA LIMA

A smile that knows no end.
A smile that admirably knows its end.
Her smile swells like the night
and both eyes shrink into a small, hidden
stone. Attribute of a mineral

wrapped in a millenary oil cloth: Knowing
how to laugh and greet with the hand.
The lapses and eurekas of laughter happen
with the simplicity of a chair from Pompeii.
The hand offers the brevity of dew
and the dew lingers like the warm sand of memory.
She will always offer the intricate simplicity of her laughter
and the liquid labyrinth of her hand inside the dream.

I HEAR A BIRD

I hear a speckled bird go:
caw-caw.
Three green circles inside my head
and eyes that make the night open and close.
Footstools for the violinists
and in the middle of the arabesque slope
a carafe takes a bow as if dancing a minuet.
Prince Albert coats and moon-dappled
hats with little wings
rush to hide behind the trees.
Violins also grow severed
behind leaves stepped on by frost.
The violinist clad in a purple Prince Albert shouts:
caw-caw.
And all the drunk trombones at midnight
took their bow, pulled up the windows,
and lifted the violin's hair against the wind.
After a pause you could hear:
caw-caw.
First the animals talked,
the bird perfected the dictionary,
the orchestra only managed to make it whirl and whirl,

to release its spirals and to gather them
on the sleeve sewn with heraldic buttons.
The bird in its April long-coat
offered us the intruded language,
the violin's hair crisscrossed by the silky bough,
the eye of the octopus on the midday anchor:
caw-caw.
The violinist with his angelic hair,
impelled by the orchestra and its tick-tock
of black-and-blue frost, the reverent
leaf bows again, allowing a drop
to fall hydrocephalus with blood-shot eyes:
caw-caw.

May & 1971

HERE WE ARE

Here we are, this is not the place where we were headed.
I pin the nebula,
I erase all writing,
I achieve a point and release a spiral.
Aurora of the figure and a whirlwind dances.
Inside the fog a point
leaps, an early-morning cat
behind a mask, swishing its tail,
like two legs tied with straps,
beginning to sway now
like a hard-water pendulum.
Cleaving inside,
as if to prelude a swollen thorax,
the knife factory
opens the eyelid to the chamber

where the drowsy sword is shining.
We look elsewhere,
despite the glow it takes leave of,
the masked cat
controls the forthcoming bedroom.
There, an arm weighs as much
as a cartridge of water,
though suddenly letting go of its rockets,
and we are blinded
as they pat us on our backs.

December & 1971

THE EMBRACE

The two bodies
elapse after smashing the intervening
mirror, each body renders
the one it faces, beginning
to perspire like mirrors.
They know there's a moment
when a shadow will pinch them,
something like dew, unstoppable as smoke.
The unknown breath
of otherness, of the sky bending
and blinking, that eggshell
very slowly cracking.

A hand placed on the woman's shoulder.
They feel another tremor emerging,
invisible, untouchable, over there,
as large as the house, another body
it shelters and now rushing

into an invisible, untouchable river.
Legs tremble, eager to arrive
at the deciphered land,
they're now inside the sealed body.
As it begins to lean completely,
a dark body penetrating
into the other light,
slowly dimming,
and it is now this light about
to penetrate as well.
The wet darkness descending
inside our body.
They tremble like a flame
surrounded by a dark oscillating body.
Penetration in the dark,
but the fulcrum is slightly incandescent,
then as luminous
as eyes emerging for the first time,
when they begin their victorious approval.

The hand no longer on the other shoulder.
Another bridge is established
braced by the penetrating bodies.
Now the two bodies disappear,
it's the great dark nebula
bolstering its windmill sail.
The two bodies revolve
on the wheel of flying sparks.
As in after a slow extended swim
hair again surfaces covered with newts.
We look back, separating the surf,
and the desert appears with carpets and dates.

The two bodies disappear
into a point now opening its mouth.
Wetness, softness,
the infinitely-expanding sponge
all responding at the door
glowing with the ointment

of horses at daybreak and the flicker
of pheasants, their eyes barely a memory.

The dolmen bestows gifts
at the anointed door,
its old wood silently creaking.
The two bodies disappear
and unite on the edge of a cloud.
That devilfish, a sea-owl,
dries the starry perspiring
the bodies exhale in crucifixion.
Tree and phallus
know nothing of resurrection,
they surface and ebb with the half-moon
and the blazing sulfur of the sun.
The two engirded bodies,
kangaroo tail
and sea-serpent,
knot and rustle in the boreal casque.

January & 1974

OLD SURREALIST BALLAD

When the rivulet swells with lashing
snake-tails and the piano with its backside turned
displays its shoes shining like the night
when it sinks, a sagging armchair whose old wicker
strands are still a plaything for the boy with a big head
Taking shelter from a slice of violin melon
the dancers bump their heads and perspire saw-dust
and midnight is as bored
as a chessboard leaned against a blackboard

I had no plan to go, but my key-chain was missing
the enormous lock the dog that always follows me
until it goes off licking the back of its leg
The violin like an arm covered with frogs
began releasing drops of evaporated honey
The chief's canoe crossed the crystal lake
at the stroke of two in the morning
and those who woke up danced with those who were
[sleeping
The woman we waited for is here and I hid
like a hypocrite behind a child's box of pencils
which lent me their yellow fingers
and scraps of the accordion like a grapefruit packed in syrup
I used to save tears like bread crumbs
to throw into the pool of sissified alligators
When the doughnut began to puff
the patent leather definitely squealed
and the chief's canoe was filled with crystal shards.

20 September 1975

PIERRE JORIS

from ANIMALS TO THE POINT

(. . .)

The small animals
entered here
an early evening with
forgettable news
they burrow
sparrows & no hawks
finches & no eagles
an owl maybe
a mole
chant it
An anima
with an else
in terminal
position,
points
elsewhere
again a gain
of if not
light then
a darker
clarity
telluric
swamp critters
cry out for better
or against
worse encroachments.
sparrows & no hawks
finches & no eagles

they fly through
your singing
make a home therein
"a breathless impatience"
found in wild animals
"almost a silly unwillingness
to come to the point"
—as if the point
was to come
to the point,
a male insistence
crossing a laissez-faire
kingdom.

(. . .)

Reeling, no
kneel-
ing before
the mezzo-
soprano,
begging
do not come to a point
flow, keep moving
the sound from just
below to just above
modulate the
unending lines,
start again in
the middle, nel
mezzo sing it anew,
sparrow,
finch,
do not come
to a point.
Neither the point
of laughter nor
that of freezing,
no point-blank

point-and-shoot
not even a departure from
symmetry in the alignment
of the littlest
ones in one or the other
lattice sites of a
crystal,
mezzo
is not crystal clear
but a hymn to liquid
sublunar
not subatomic,
the mess of
molecules,
the moles, where
have the small
animals
gone?
Lost along the lattices
between point a
& point b
with no Point Success
peaking in no
Cascade Range
near no
Mount Rainier
& not even a
point-woman but a point-
less
cross between
–between, between,
the only place to be!–
a sparrow & a mezzo
whose favorite flower
is not a poinsettia
shrub
with showy usually
scarlet (it is an
American tropical

thing) bracts
between small yellow
flowerlike inflorescences.
Is there a point
in a flower being
flowerlike?
Are small animals
animal-like?
Does between ever
come first
or last?
Ask Poincaré,
Raymond that is,
he of the contributions
to celestial mechanics
wrongly called
pointed.
But we want
sublunar dynamics,
desire to become
poikilothermic creatures
our spotted lives
adaptable,
refusing sun-worship
pointillists
in the full order
"of the poem in which divine, human, and
animal orders must be revealed"
down to the wooden
animals,
familiar household pet
menageries
or am I stretching
a point?
Soon as nib
hits paper
all shed ink
is a stretched
point. period.

Or else a stiff at
attention stance
taken
by a hunting dog
waiting for the one
year each
century
when chicory
turns
into a living being
& victory
is not the
point.

(. . .)

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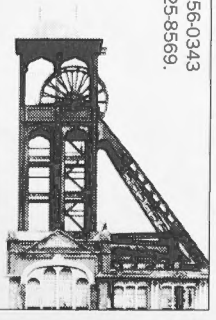

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The MIT Press

GUSTAF SOBIN

BREATH'S SUCCESSIVE VERTEBRAE

. . .had kept, ever since, a
continuous distance,
a
deep remove from your Own, in-
nate susceptibilities. rooms, doors, windows: yes,
would face, now, what-

ever perspectives might, eventually,
re-
tain, withhold you, those un-
impaired vistas, for instance, onto the thick,
leafy masses of so much
wavering

re-
flection. would enter, wouldn't you; slake on the
heave of all those
wet,

ligated facets. for 'here' is little more, in
fact, than
interim, than that
on-
going hiatus between a past-imperfect and an ever-

suspended
conditional. would sip: yes, extract, from
that errant glitter, the
linked nodes
of

nexus. for there's
'this, this,' you'd tell yourself: yes, what the
lips would wrest, say, from so many thick,
shimmering beads, the
breath's

suc-
cessive vertebrae.

# #

what otherwise isn't, you'd

written; *who otherwise*

aren't. no, inhabited nothing, you realized, but a
landscape laid sonorous be-
tween two
in-
determinates. but a voice, occasionally; but the

shrub of
a

voice; yes, but the very leaves of the
shrub of
that very voice as they thickened—pulsatile—a-
bout a

tongue's
in-
cursions.

VITEZSLAV NEZVAL

THE LESSER ROSE GARDEN

Tr. from the Czech by
Jerome Rothenberg & Milos Sovak

[Prologue]

The sun reflected in the colored splashes of
the paper lanterns in the lesser rose garden.

The bowman lurking back of the ecliptic with imaginary
arrows pierced the apricots.

He drove a needle thru her hat that lady sleeping
on her swing the lilies of the valley underneath her
[slowly burning out.

The dandelions' breath.

A mussel opened up toward sunset
in the sand drifts saga's dream.

And a stork drifts on a boat in midstream: this
Italian poet from the days of Petrarch.

Here on dusty roads enclosed by ivy I can feel the sun's vibrations fill me & remembrance of lost love is like the lesser rose garden & the time spent in the arbor where we read romantic verses of eternity & mystery.

And it's like a memory of bygone Sundays from your childhood & your eyes fixed sharply on the highway crossing opened wide like flowers in September those blue moonlike blossoms which will stay with me till death reminding me of sunsets of my home of sagas where I know nothing but the name.

Premier Plan
[Stage Front]

This night was ablaze like a necklace.
Above the green Bohemian lakes, the calls of frogs in chorus,
a bell was sounding an alarm.
Like the meridian a rubber ring of sound expanded
over the rotting woods,
over the loony idyll of the goblins those who chased each
[other
thru the stacks of wheat,
over the searchlights from the cities
beams inscribing pithy poems onto the clouds.
The rings that were projected there,
the foaming champagne bottles,
a roulette wheel like Saturn circled Monte Carlo,
while Versailles spouted golden fountains
& the Hotel Ritz in clouds broadcast a final tango
to which corsairs on Corsica would dance
in time for the new vintage.
Vesuvius smoldering over Italy which rested on its laurels
& in Leningrad the streets were empty opening like canals
into the world beyond.
Under the deepest basements land mines crisscrossed
like white-hot cigars
lighting up caves & tunnels
in which gangsters crouched with guns & flashlights
Asia steeped in perfumes waggled like a yellow flag
embossed with fancy baubles lotus gardens
cities that shed light like gold-rimmed china tea sets.
Tokyo convulsing in the air was like a neon sign
set up by fakirs sleeping at the base of giant
Hindustani mountain ranges.
Antarctic ice was like the ruins of a marble kingdom
polar bears would dart across & snow-white fishes without
[blood
would swim there.
Africa, black paradise with palm trees,

on whose tents the gold-washed earrings of its negresses
were hanging
from which parrots swung nightwatch of the Sahara.
Australia sleeping in the trees was an electrified menagerie
inside a luna park
& here Niagara Falls by moonlight
hummed with organ-sounds above the Indian burial grounds
& further on above America where they were taking leave
like two ships of a single caliph
filled with slaves & cargo, just about to sail.
The Bohemian lakes gone green with choruses of frogs,
remnants smoldering after the storm has passed
with the earth flooded out its primitive glory gone under its
oceans unending
lighthouses loom like crazed fishermen's wives singing songs
that await an old sailor's return who is not coming back.
This night was ablaze like a necklace.
Above the closed windows the earth moved on air like a
[crown
& the sleepers like sleepwalkers opened the windows.
A bell rang an alarm.
Take over the world! Join the vanguard!
And quickly an airplane took off in the night
to plant a flag on the battlements high on the crown
& behind it flew thousands of airplanes
some like spent rockets burning
augmenting the legions of stars
still others returning like the work-weary builders of
[Babylon
while those who kept up the struggle
formed letters & words in the stars:
Take over the world!
Take over the world! Join the vanguard!
Swell the numbers of white-hot cigars in the basements
make the cities you throw in the air fly like acrobats
set up fireworks deep in volcanoes in time for the vintage.
Inscribe poems onto clouds more fierce than the gold of
[Versailles
& let the fire of heaven be joined to the fire of earth.

Wrapped in rubberized fireproof bags
& careening like balls on the fiery beams
make the palm trees hide seeds huge as ostrich eggs
under their ashes
give earth back its harvests
let it sprout like a sweet-tasting jungle
for the few who endure.
And take over the world!
Renew Tyrteus's rock
because it doesn't make sense, no not for the sake of the
[suicide's
gurgle, the tired man's gasp
that the godhead of healthy humanity perishes
because it doesn't make sense for the mad pilots' miracles
not to have happened
who wake up this night from their sleepwalker's sleep
flying landing on battlements of the night's diamond
[crown
like carrier pigeons with a telegram driving us blind:
Take over the world!
And the flowers' blood spatters the coffeehouse terraces
& children are born despite the world's prisons
& on earth no gold is lost
& no platinum's lost
& no fire.
To defenestrate sleepwalking men who are blind
who saw this night ablaze like a necklace
its hieroglyphs still undeciphered
& who in the sound of the bell heard their death knells.
Take over the world!
& then walk like nomads
away from the ponderous lakes of Bohemia
where night's as green as a chorus of frogs
& hear an orchestra of cries & lights
& in the rhythms of its drums that clatter
like buds of black & white light
see the stage front of earth as a mirror
laid bare by their searchlights
who knew of the need for a miracle

to live eternity in one generation
& to not lose a moment
those whose sleep like their death was lit by clairvoyance
as night's sleep was lit
who joined eternity's fire with the fire of a moment.
This night was ablaze like a necklace.
And just then an airplane took off on patrol
with a pilot who looked like an airman from 1914
whose shadow fell on the gates of the town
with signed proclamations of war
& covered the sun until darkness was everywhere.
We all watched thru smoke-colored glasses
& the old women saw the sign first divined by the Sibyl:
Bohemian nights turning green with frogs in a chorus.
But the pilot today was still more appalling
a sower who scoops up stars in his lap
& casts them like so many seeds on the earth
to keep off the fire lying in wait for us
when the planet like Joan of Arc twists on the pyre
& recants not one word of all that was spoken.

ALLEN S. WEISS

ZURN'S DOLL

. . .abolish the wall that separates woman from her image.
—Hans Bellmer
Petite anatomie de l'inconscient physique ou l'anatomie de l'image

In the anatomy of love, the spirit of contradiction reigns. Eros creates an intermingling, a reversibility, between the real and the virtual, such that sexual excitation is simultaneously a subjective and an objective state, merging self and other, masochism and sadism, psychic intuition and objective chance. Eroticism coalesces the body with its mental simulacra, with its corporeal doubles. *Le Nôtre: the practical fusion of the natural and the picturesque. As the gardener obliges bushes to exist in the form of balls, cones, and cubes, man imposes his elementary certitudes, as well as the geometric and algebraic habits of his thought, upon the image of woman.* Love is an experiment with the irrational, a confirmation by chance, the narcissistic projection of an eternally desired *döppelganger.*

*

Every love letter is a primer of decomposition. *My dear, your passion of last evening to scrupulously decompose yourself before me, your very confusion, could not have been more victorious, even if one were oblivious to the fact—and this is only a detail—that the game of solitaire of the hundred bones of your feet marvelously cut through the velour of my intestines. As soon as I will be immobilized under the pleated skirt of your fingers, all too weary to undo the garlands with which you have surrounded the somnolence of your never-born fruit, you shall breathe your perfume and your fever into me, so that, in total daylight, my sex will emerge from the interior of your own.* . . . Hans Bellmer had always thought that the body is like a

sentence, offering the possibility of constant permutation, of perpetual decomposition and recomposition following the form of anagrams:

Beil / Lieb / Leib.
[Hatchet / love / body.]

The equation of the image may be algebraic or syntactic, existential or phantasmic, but in any case it affords irrevocable evidence that the libido is mobile, fluid, ephemeral, erratic, malleable, vacillatory, protean, desultory, eccentric. All nostalgia is ultimately the yearning for a body not yet possessed, a body not yet imagined–for the real body of woman is nothing more than what Verlaine imagined his beloved whores to be:

Poseuses et bêtes poupées
Rien que de chiffons occupées.

[Pretentious and stupid dolls
Nothing but living rags.]

Whence Bellmer's fascination with Cesare Lombroso's *Transfers of Sensation in Hysteria and Hypnosis,* where the latter wrote of a psychopathological case that exactly prefigured Bellmer's own phantasms as expressed in both *The Games of the Doll* and *Short Anatomy of the Image.* It concerned a young girl, *14 years old, with a graceful body, who suddenly grew six inches at puberty, and whose first periods were accompanied by hysterical symptoms. After two months she was subject to convulsions and hyperaesthesia, which caused a thread placed in her hand to feel like an iron bar. The following month, after bouts of somnambulism and diverse changes of character, she lost her sight at the very same moment that she acquired the faculty of seeing through the extremity of her nose and the lobe of her left ear, all the while conserving the same acuity of vision. The same transformation occurred for her sense of smell which, sometime later, was displaced to her heel. . .*

The body in pieces, rearranged concordant with desire; the sensorial apparatus readjusted in harmony with the most extreme limits of synaesthesia: proofs of the desire of the other. Whence Bellmer's inspiration by Sade's violent modifications of the object of desire; by Lautréamont's perpetual transmogrifications of cruel, ecstatic passion; by Artaud's revolt against the restrictions of the rationalized, historicized body; by Bataille's hallucinatory, nightmarish, delirious, subversive,

blasphematory, perverse conflation of eye-egg-testicle in *Story of the Eye.*

Bellmer knew that erotic excitation always precedes the existence of the desired object. His doll was thus a prelude to Eros, an annex of his soul, a schematization of his passions, an incitation to lasciviousness. He dreamt of meeting a woman who would fulfill all the conscious and unconscious conditions of his desire—conditions which, of course, couldn't be thematized in advance. Remembering Heinrich von Kleist's *On the Marionette Theater,* he despaired that the human being cannot attain perfection, since grace exists most purely either in a body totally devoid of consciousness, the marionette, or in a body endowed with infinite consciousness, God. Yet Bellmer desperately sought that very same grace in the body of a woman. He dreamt of the love of an android, a dormant woman, a sleeping beauty; he yearned for the impossible embrace of that creature celebrated in Paul Valéry's *"The Sleeper":*

> *Que malgré l'âme absente, occupée aux enfers,*
> *Ta forme au ventre pur qu'un bras fluide drape,*
> *Veille; ta forme veille, et mes yeux sent ouverts.*
>
> *[Despite the absence of the soul, retained in Hell,*
> *Your form, with its pure belly draped by a fluid arm,*
> *Is awake; your form is awake, and my eyes are open.]*

*

It began with a dream in which there were strange voices: she bore a penis the size of a bull's, in order to make love to a dark skinned, long haired woman, all the while being watched by a little girl, her former self. She heard her own love-making. She witnessed this scene, as if from very, very far away. She took no pleasure in it, but she was nevertheless fascinated, petrified. Her breasts were buttocks, her mouth a sex, her clitoris a penis. Another penis, sinuous and snakelike, pointed and tripartite, with glans of leather, iron and bone—the Devil's tool—simultaneously pierced her three holes with unrivaled fervor. She was Satan's Doll. She was as if bewitched, an automaton, her will paralyzed, ravaged by a frozen hysteria. The pain increased as she was cleaved in two, one half looking at the other, one half hot and sentient, the other cold and observant; one half force, the other form. She was her own double, nameless, cast into the freezing certainty of the absolute void.

On this glorious autumn day of 1953, Bellmer strolled through the exhibition of his work at the Maison de France on the Kurfürstendamm in Berlin, with true satisfaction at seeing such an appreciation of his art in the country that only a couple of decades ago had branded him a decadent artist. Everything was possible, and he had the rare feeling that he was prepared for anything whatsoever. And then he saw her: beautiful, all in black with but a red rose to punctuate her strangely rigid form, her face elegantly and mysteriously expressionless, a vague odor of jasmine emanating from her being. What was particularly astounding, indeed uncanny, was her resemblance to his beloved doll! Even when in 1935 he reincarnated the doll into its second version, he couldn't bear to change the face, for it so closely accorded with the lineaments of his desire. Now, he beheld yet another transmigration of this soulless being, a carnal version of his passion.

For that initial moment, all his thoughts and feelings condensed on the rose, like a teardrop rolling off the cheek of a virgin at her first glimpse of martyrdom. The image of the tenth photograph from *Die Puppe* flashed through his mind: the backs of two legs cut off at the thighs, one foot shod in a black leather shoe while the other was covered with an undergarment, a rose (too obvious a symbol, too perfect to avoid) appearing between the two severed members. He recalled the words from the *Studies from Nature* of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre: *Chardin said that when in Persia a young man offers a rose to his mistress, he leads her to understand that, like the flower, his face is aflame and his heart in cinders.* Bellmer wondered whose mistress she was.

The attraction was mutual and fatal, and, despite the manifest uniqueness of the encounter, despite the eternality of the mutual passion, the course of events followed a stereotyped routine: café, hotel, bed. When he discovered that she too wrote anagrams, their incommensurable fate was sealed. Hans Bellmer and Unica Zürn were to live together for many years, in a miserable ménage à trois: Bellmer, Zürn, Die Puppe. He would illustrate her book of anagrams, *Hexentexte [Witches' Writings].* She would inspire his new games of the doll. They would nourish her schizophrenia.

He hadn't realized that the very first sign of her madness was manifested in a letter she sent to her son in Germany, after seeing him die in a nightmare. It was an anagram on the sentence from The Epistle of Paul to the Galitians, 4:15, namely, *IHR HAETET EURE AUGEN AUSGERISSEN [Ye would have plucked out your own eyes.].* What remained obviously yet disquietingly unstated was the rest of the phrase: . . . *ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given*

them to me. These eyes she would find in her nightmares, in her schizophrenic deliria, staring at her without respite. They were her own eyes.

*

Unica Zürn had always been extraordinarily disturbed by a passage from *The Man Without Qualities* by Robert Musil, written while he lived on the Kurfürstendamm: *Agathe said: "It seems to me as a child I loved my dolls more than I've ever loved a man. After you'd left I found a trunk full of my old dolls in the attic." "What did you do with them?" Ulrich asked. "Did you Give them away?" "Who could I have given them to? I cremated them in the stove," she said.* As a child, the young Unica did little better, as she recounted in her book, *Dunkler Frühling [Somber Spring].* In terrible vengeance for the years of ceaseless unhappiness imposed upon her childhood, one day she took the beautiful doll she had just received as a gift and, as her horrified family looked on, cut out its eyes with a knife, not, as Breton suggests in *Nadja, . . .with the idea of always plucking out the eyes of dolls to see what is behind them,* but out of sheer malice. For little Unica knew that behind the doll's eyes was the void.

This was the same little girl whose hysteria would later be congealed, anesthetized, deadened into frenzied depersonalization. This was the very same little girl whose end was foreshadowed on the last page of her mournful book: *Now it is nearly night in the bedroom. Only the distant light of a streetlamp feebly shines through the window. At the moment, it's all the same to her whether she dies "in a foreign country" or in her own garden. She climbs onto the windowsill, holding on the latch of the shutter, and looks into the mirror once again, her image like a shadow. She finds herself ravishing, and her decision is colored by a touch of remorse. It's over, she says in a low voice, and she feels dead even before her feet leave the windowsill.*

ROBERTO TEJADA

THREE POEMS

Being a day on which the eating of flesh
was forbidden, the monosyllabic, misdelivered
tug of the deprived body dancing
on the clumsy bone, earth
gleaming with blood of the unlawful,
the recurrence of first infliction,
or so the animal riven between my legs
in jets issued from the throat, gash
semblance of a human relish
in the agony of others,
as there were harrowed corpses
everywhere once here in uproar
and repetition over time
receding now into the ecstatic
lather and stench as you quiver
tight to the foul edge and fine gore

birdsong: insomnia

and the bulge of rubbish spewing from the mound
of bags left on a corner, does it matter where
or how meticulously sifted by the frail
scratch of a man there, anonymous atrocity,
this mere surface of miserable speech
at whose expense, what spasmodic drool,
whose squat life along the margins
of a public coherence bound only by malice
and raw with the hate of so much human
stink—as in the glower of the keeper

in surveillance never reconciled
between the executioner and victim

~

Tired, and with the tight transit of talking. A weather suited
not to a limitless field of occurrence, but to confinement,
an infinitesimal part of the alliterative outcome of how
and when to say it widespread, the entire keyboard,
palladian texture minded as in a piano music
listened to while nodding headlong off
into parallel motion with a change of position
during the alphabet years and a canon
at the lower fifth, hands crossing and thumbs
under in theme and inversion
to alternating thirds
with the aim of asking
what matter, what business to the tourist
whether the place is run by despots,
whether someone's been executed elsewhere
on the streets, whether the natives are
banned from beaches, or deprived of the water
used to fill how many swimming
pools, and why the climate is such
that we favor conditions where
moral values are established
in art and faithfully followed, like myself,
by sycophants in thatches of acrylic
plush in pink and black fabrics, feathery
torso and cunt in gloss or nipples
by leather straps petrified in the ideal
body a death wish. Or what happens
when you inhabit me thinking
here of each disordered instant with everybody
talking at once, all such a difficult web,

so many people to attend to, and not
regarding some arcane reference but the limited
world, all in the head, as it opens up to convince
you I am not formless, no matter
what the potential attempt
no matter once
in season when sound in dream
place delight and work of the vine
from furrows be praised the book of hours
whose clock-stop conceit over the house
of having unto higher ground I was
exhausted when I woke up
to the involuntary movements
and sensory impulse along the chain
of nerve cells, the collective
ashes and suspended
planks of the pleasure ward
wherein the human
shape surrounding certain
words was mint and glycerin,
drugs and explosives

~

Not a word of my surrounding not a half-whispered
go to catch the rattled ought of a third concurrent

universe unlatched the more you wait, chalk drawn
thick of old around the marred bodies left

by the citizen squads our authorities facilitate, fail
to prosecute, guilt being therefore—quote/unquote

or so the papers—a 'willful negligence,' a 'scathing
complicity' in the bloodlust rife until 'wolves

lower' incite the end of illness, until the highland
collide of cricket jaguar issue running water

when physical comfort, when bodily prowess
and sovereign shape are rendered command

over the meaning of a nimbus once in sprigs
of goldenrod or Indian paintbrush, chalice

owing to rock crystal and featherwork, ivory!
carved in supple limbs, remote gazes and crusty

wounds, gold-leaf reredos in bellows pyramidal
from an organ pipe: an opulence wrought from

the nightmare of native oblation, of x-ian zeal
waged on local hands in effigies, Saint James

the Greater made in Goa and the Philippines,
or Rose of Lima, in a ministry of Indians

and slaves fallen victim to epidemic, heroically
to God and in penitential practice so extravagant

—cat claws and fish bones across her wasted
flesh—as to be the subject of ecclesiastic inquiry

into questions of faith, soundness of mind
stretched the length and breadth of his midrib

and torso in taut spasms, teeth clenched and lips
in a slather of animal darkness in time spent over

thickets, our twin intelligence a forearm and fist
in fast strokes around gleam and edge, tips

wet with each other, then deeper, to a clump
of hair and fingers guiding the back of his

head, mouth over gloss and curvature, blade
inextinguishable when too-slow a swelter released

in sounds of who, whose ah spread soaked along
his back and thighs rubbed sleek across

the wonder imperfections of form, lips abruptly
pursed to each moan pillowed by the sudden

hush of skin a spirograph, his dark upper
eyelids and lashes down his own limbs

now in aftermath-order and lucible enormity

ROSS GAY

TWO POEMS

BAR-B-QUE

On *60 Minutes*
a man explained that as a secret
police official in South Africa he once,
to make a body
that he had killed disappear, roasted
it like a ham.
He and his associates at the same time eating
bar-b-que
while the man sizzled.
I never would have figured
that as a way to dispose of a body.
More the traditional,
club skull to pulp with gun butts or baseball bats
and bury it in the woods.
But roasting. Think of that,
the smell of human, cooking,
(though certainly not much different
than swine,) intermingled with and tainting
the smell and taste of the grilled
chicken sandwiches and ale. Olfactory
makes up at least fifty percent
of your taste sensation.
Eating the killed and dead.
The spit sunk in the charred
man's ass, probed
through the mouth, locked
like some devil's horn, the fat

drip drip from the meaty parts.
Hams, ribs. A face
emptied of skin, eyes, of person.

These men went free.

But you can see in their eyes,
weaker than the dead, these men
are dying themselves by the second.
By the second.
Sustained only by the killing.

Teeth smoked black
in that screamed smile.

THELMA

My Nana, Thelma, has been persecuted
for the past thirty years by God. Doggone,
Nana. This is what she sees:
a pasty haloed gentleman out of the corner
of her eye. Making things go as they do.
Nana has the Winans tape playing in
the boombox Mom and Dad sent for Christmas.
Bebe and Cece. And she wonders why
the boombox comes for her, she wonders what
the tape will play. You see, my Nana
is sick.

She stabbed her couch a few years back,
gashes of plastic jabbed into the down,
plastic frayed into tiny blades, tiny
icicles mining fur in the guts

of the furniture. To deter burglars.
A bit later she threw a pound of bologna
in the trash because someone had come
and poisoned it, she knew. My mother relays
the story with a smile on her face. She
bathes in the glorious fact that her side
is less fucked than Dad's. Despite her addict
brother. "He's recovering."

Inside Nana sees a ship plow drunkenly
through rummaging waves. Sharks swarm
like flies to the dead and suicides cast
from the deck. The sharks' bladed backs
piercing the black wake the bloody
Atlantic long. Nana knows this boat,
but doesn't know why. She sees Keith,
her dead son, a heart attacked
thirty-five, crawling on the ocean floor.
Cornrows unbraid in the grinding hands,
the wind in the sea. Join the seductive,
squiddish, flagellations of the greenery,
the seaweed. He feels the sand like hands
claiming and reclaiming. They recognize
him like the blind read faces.
Under a million tons of flow,
with millions of swoll-foot, ankle-chafed,
drowned mothers,
he is where he can
finally be sung to sleep.

Nana sits on the plastic covered couch
and can't hear her own breathing. Wonders what
page she slipped from. Who will design the scenery?
Her living sons, doctor and restaurant
manager, fear her silence, turn to the sounds
of traffic, chatter. Sleep with fans on
for the humm.

But wait. Listen. Be silent
for a minute. Because this Nana hears
no song. She hears no song.

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Paul Violi

BATHOS

One or two, it seems, turn up
each spring, not far off a road
where they'd wandered into the woods
until they dropped in the snow and froze,
providing filler for the local paper:
another middle-aged male
unidentified, decomposed.

Reading about one of them yet again,
the usual list of what he wore,
how many shirts, pants, jackets,
socks, I find myself sliding back
into the same sad and hollow poem
I've tried to write before,
about how a person,
an all-American misfit,
moving from place
to place, job to job, can keep
putting on one self after another
without sloughing any off,
growing heavier but more hollow
with each menial part he has to play.

And so it goes, a half-formed poem
spun out of images of luck and loss,
rag and bone, soul and husk.
And when I think I'm at the point
where I can wrap it up in silences
that peel away, onion-like, or open
like a weak hand or, finally,

a mummy, empty, unraveling
as it's slowly twirled,
afloat amid dim stars and its own dust,
the poem stalls. I'm sidetracked again,
remembering myself, like so many others
who wandered around for a while
when young, in Afghanistan, in Nepal,
Turkey, Bulgaria, Spain,
getting dressed before going to sleep,
putting on all I had to ward off the cold.
I see myself again, in Amsterdam,
an impetuous kid on a Sunday morning,
April 9, nineteen sixty eight,
with a ticket home, a flight to catch,
but no money to pay the hotel bill.
How I got dressed again and again,
reluctant to leave anything behind, pulling
khaki pants over dungarees, tucking
flannel shirts under cotton shirts,
shoving a manuscript, a couple of years
of turgid poems, under my belt, and
finally, shoving myself into a blue suit
that'd been stuffed into a knapsack
for a couple of years. Sweating, barely
able to bend my knees or arms,
I lurch through the lobby, telling
the suspicious manager I'm off to church.

I try to hitchhike to the airport
but all I get are wary looks.
I still arrive early. Too early:
the check-in counter is closed.
Days without a meal, I want to be
first on line, first on the plane,
first seat from the galley.
Tired, woozy, I ever-so-often
lean back to read the clock overhead.
I'm asleep on my feet, unaware
of the crowd forming behind me.

Again I open my eyes, lean back,
look up, but stumble, and as I feel
my shoe heel roll over something,
crush something soft but solid,
I hear a groan of agony
so profound my stomach knots up.
I turn in time to catch him as he falls.
His eyes squeezed tight, he tries to speak.
His eyebrows are slightly tweezed.
Tears run down his cheeks; his cheeks
are lightly powdered and rouged.
His hair, a shade darker than natural,
is finely cut and he's wearing
a long mink coat that matches his hair.
Trembling, crumbling, he leans on the man
next to him, also draped in mink
the same color as his dyed hair.
His face is powdered, too—It's Liberace?
Yes, it's Liberace and his friend!
I look down, we're all looking down
at his friend's foot, the shoeless one,
covered by a thick white sock.

Doubled over, he's trying to speak.
I try to pick up his cane
with my free hand, but packed
into my suit, poetry manuscript stiff
as a board against my stomach, I can't reach it.
I'm afraid he's going to pass out.
Unbelievably, he attempts a joke:
"Of all the gasp feet of all the toes gasp behind you
gasp you had to gasp step on the broken one!
[Unnnggnnhhgggh!"

He slumps, collapses. A call for tickets makes the crowd close in. I try to help, try to hold him upright while sputtering apologies. But Liberace, looking at me, the way I'm moving, lurching backwards now, arms outstretched, clearing the way as we move along the corridor, my wrinkled suit about to
[burst,

tells me, very politely, very firmly, but with something like dread rising in his voice, Forget it, *please.* It's nothing, nothing at all. I insist, really. I'm telling you: Will you please stay the hell away from us!

KEVIN KING

VERSIONS OF MALE: AN EVOLUTION

1

I feel the breeze that rolls
around me, that vertically hammocks

me on the veranda, as masculine,
a hand, almost, avuncular and certain.

Is *that* the masculine part–the certainty
of it, the untentative brazenness?

2

Some men here have evolved into tree-climbers,
men with a peculiar calling

and prehensile toes. There was one
I didn't notice till he was already

in the beach palm's *ovaries*,
at the thatched summit that covers

the coconuts. I thought he was only trimming,
But momentarily there was only stubble

and pudor. Then he walked down the tree,
cut it off below beach level,

and threw sand on the stump
till it was gone.

3

Later *'the Cane Man'* trimmed and put
one-meter sections of cane stalks

through a kind of wringer—two metal
rolling pins with screwlike rods

wound around the barrels.
The rods derive their juice-extracting power

from being rolled, like a two-dimensional
protein
that is nothing till, rolled, it projects

as half of a 3-D helix.
Is it evolution that the Cane Man

abets, separating the sugary essence
from two-dimensional husks, almost obscene

in their flattened disembowelment?
Bees drunk on the wet cane innards

bumble now off the chest of a comely girl
sucking down cane juice, a gift,

an expression of Cane Man's ***kindness***,
a-sexual worker bees, messengers stuck

with the sweet message.

MARWAN

EIGHT PAINTINGS

Head 1973
Egg tempera/pastel, 170x180 cm

Head 1977–80
Egg tempera/canvas, 300x225 cm

Head 1978
Oil/canvas, 81x60 cm

Head 1977
Egg tempera/canvas, 195x130 cm

Marionette 1979
Aquarelle/paper, 78x56 cm

Marionette 1980
Aquarelle/paper, 78x56 cm

Marionette 1980
Oil/canvas, 146x97 cm

Marionette 1982
Aquarelle-guoache over etching, 70x35 cm

CLAYTON ESHLEMAN

MEDITATION ON MARWAN'S FACES

The flats of the human face
will not admit (a mask). The ears,
jaws, cheeks (bent surfaces)
as they cry here mountainous colors
(worms), hurtled brows, worms of
mountains, husks of lean-to emotions,
arrogance dappled with
bringing arrogance closer,
gelid waterfalls of hares that do
not abstract out, but bronze, ruby snivels–

the flats, I repeat,
Marwan, whose peat rekneaded is
what Hades hides, our faces
the flat will not admit. The depth,
conceived on surface, is a depth I cannot
evade in mask. My leers, inabilities to walk
on a flat earth rounding me, reviling
Dachau months, they are available
because this man is not sure. Is not

surface, is not pure. Is
sink to the locust sensibility.
Eaten away, we are ripe, lame, the crux is
the human can be faced
but can the face be said in language?
Can a brittle alphabetic compost
zoom in on the hived
jungles cording Dis, the arachnoid trampoline,
the mast of bait coherent to another realm?

Head on, hand woven, a mandala of
tufts and thread taken apart, the human face
is a twisting warren, wave on wave of
tunneled crimson, days of napalm, nights
of azure peace. It is a kind of rug
before its shape is fixed—in Marwan's
works—in a between that is not
a mystical point between us
but a depth between the deathmask of the Covering
Persona and peeled off skin.

In this depth both mask and meat are included
in the impasto of pus-like fibers,
a rabbit flayed in a romantic gondola,
moments of unchanging plaster, streaked
by weeping caked with first fruits,
the cenote of the eye
limpid, greased by the plunging
flecks of things as they sacrifice
into our hollows, and our faces fill,
empty with passing through
and over, under Narcissus—

is it that Echo died and then
a youth fell to adore the labyrinth in water,
or is it that the import of what
we see becomes an echo
at the moment we reflect, and reflecting
weave on surface, milling this crisis
into mental walls, in the twist of which
we anticipate a face, more coarse more
animal than ours, a furred muzzle that in dream

begins to reassemble on our chests
animal grief entombed in nightmare,
pounding on our heart *Let me in.*
Not the fantasy of a childhood locked out,
crying for its parents. . . No, let me fold
that in, call it a minor green

but because it occurs allow it as part
of the supreme lock-out.

Dream muzzle wants in to a place we
no longer are, or only are in imagination,
a place so remote it is hardly part of our becoming—
more, it is the being
at the heart of becoming, the unchanging
kernel in the loosening hull of the human face,
chamber of the anthrobeast,
visible in these Marwan eyes, vaulted at the brow,
steeply recessing vaginal folds of stone
darken to the chink through which we enter Niaux.

[1981]

ADONIS

THE FACE—FROM MARWAN'S BRUSHPOINT

(Tr. by Clayton Eshleman and Bernard Bador from Anne Wade Minkowski's French version, translated from the Arabic)

The face is labyrinth: art permits an encounter only in a labyrinth.

*

The visible and the invisible have in the face a single body.

*

The face is not form: it is movement always in formation.

*

The face has no beginning outside of itself.

*

Time and expanse—unique wave in the ocean of the face.

*

The body is a universe—its space is the face.

*

The face is the mask of no thing.

*

The face is truly present only when its traits disappear.

*

The face—perpetual metamorphosis.

*

The face unveils itself only in the shake-up of its structure:
by the shake-up, by the absence of image, we arrive at the
image.

*

What one cannot see of the face is its reality.

*

The face is a singular which cannot be pluralized.
No, it is neither singular nor plural.

*

The face is itself and other than itself.

*

The face cannot be explained: one interprets it.

*

The face repeats itself like waves:
no wave resembles another.

*

The face repairs the body's errors.
As far as it is concerned, nothing can repair it.

*

In each face is found an infinity of faces.

*

Man's face is another image of the universe's face.

*

The face is an unknown that one can see, hear, touch.

*

The face is not where it is found—it is not elsewhere either.

*

The face cares about neither the encounter nor the promise—
it prefers to live in the instant of expectation.

*

I look at the face—I lose myself between what I see and what I would like to see.

*

Paths, whether ramified, steeply sloped or bewitching,
do not unfold like that which is unfolded between the face and us.

*

Perhaps there is no water apart from fire, said the face.

*

The moon assumes the shape of the face only when it is finished:
it is then that it becomes full.

*

The face has a chain it can break away from only through ambiguity.

*

We do not truly see the face if we do not see it in its total nakedness:
the face is nakedness veiled.

*

Our path toward the face is a face.

*

When I see the face's sun, my eyes fill with its clouds.

*

Death has no face.

*

The face is a planet revolving around itself.

*

The light around the face is seed, colors are fields.

*

Light slides on the body:
it leaves a trace only on the face.

*

Everything clears up with light, except the face:
each time its scintillation increases, its obscurity increases too.

*

When we apprehend the face, we can say:
we apprehend everything.

*

The face is a symbol for an alphabet of symbols:
it is impossible to completely paint it or say it.

*

If obscurity has a song, it is the face.

*

Eyelashes are wings the face uses to fly.

*

The face is a light which exceeds light.

*

We see in the body only nature.
In the face, we see nature and its beyond.

*

The face is the central point in the sphere of the universe.

*

In drawing the face, we draw the poetry
of raw material and its beautiful potter's clay: the body.

*

Out of the rock of existence gushes a water: the face.

*

The face comes from where we no longer expect it.

*

The face is a solitary star in a space whose name is body.

*

The body is a fall, the face an ascension.

*

The face is movement:
in light it slows, in color it accelerates.

*

In the face light and secret unite.

*

Day is legible only in the face's night.

*

The face—perpetual journey.

*

The face—haven for a light which does not travel
but remains always outward bound.

*

The secret—tree which in the face is a forest.

*

The face frequents all the clouds,
but marries only one: that of tears.

*

The face has a word to which the ear does not know how to listen.

*

The face is a painting which swims outside the frame.

*

In the face, the abyss begins
at the very instant where the summit begins.

*

The face is preface to the book of the body.

*

From the face comes the word, but it speaks itself only with symbols.

*

How splendid the alchemy of color, of light and of form!
It sends everything back to its primal elements, transforming it into a face.

*

The face leaves us, each time we look at it,
facing a beginning.

*

The sun is the face of nature.
Day is the face of night.

*

The face makes you constantly climb a staircase which
leads at the same time toward reality's summit and toward its depths.

*

The face signals me from a place I do not know.

*

The face, the ancient one, radiates solely with the light
of its present instant.

*

The face is the body's lighthouse.

*

Nature is a continual self-celebration—
it inaugurates itself solely through the face.

*

Look into the very depths of the face,
you will see that the history of the gaze has yet to begin.

*

Everything can have an autobiography,
except the face: it is the biography.

*

Like the bird flying in a flying tree, the face laughs.

*

The face exiles us, and is our only refuge.

*

Every face is a dream, but when two faces meet,
dream and reality meet too.

*

To the face belongs another face—the face, that's it.

*

Light and shadow combine in the face.
Light is an ascending gradation,
shadow is a gradation which descends.

*

The face is born while dying in another face.

*

The creature comes to nothing. Only a face remains—that of the creator.

COMMENTARY

Anne Waldman, *IOVIS: ALL IS FULL OF JOVE, BOOK II* (Coffee House Press, 1997)
Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Drafts 15-XXX, The Fold* (Potes & Poets Press #39, 1997)
Laura Riding, *A Selection of the Poems of Laura Riding*, ed. Robert Nye (Persea Books, 1994).

IOVIS II continues Anne Waldman's "long meditation on the nature of male energy & its attendant strife & delight" (11). For Waldman, that target—male energy—is vast, mercurial, and paradoxical. Thus, vision in *IOVIS* is both telescopic and microscopic, investigating war, colonialism, and patriarchal social structures as well as the generosities of father, son, male artists and friends.

The traditional epic, told from the perspective of a central male figure, equates singularity of action, voice, and vision (i.e., heroism) with world order. But according to Waldman, an epic vision late in the second millennium must be able to address a "fragmented world in which the mind is forever spinning & buzzing through various dark then brilliant language realms" (11).

Dark then brilliant: the etymological roots of Iovis dangle down into *deiw*–('to shine'), forking out into 'sky,' 'heaven,' and 'god' to reveal an ancient (pre-linguistic?) correlation between divinity and light. This light, primarily configured as "male," has thrown whole cultures, histories, and voices into darkness. Thus, while continuing its homage to male figures (Waldman's father, Philip Guston, Joe Brainard, etc.), *IOVIS II* attempts to recover many of these "dark" vectors via allied female voices, including Sappho, the Countess of Dia, Navajo Spider Woman, and Bernadette Mayer.

Rather than abandoning the immediacy of self and world for a mythic realm, or vice-versa, Waldman collapses the distance between personal and public spheres: biography juxtaposes with "horrific reports from various fronts: Bosnia, the Acquired Immunodeficiency

Syndrome battlefield, issues of insurrection & of gun control" (11). Reports of plutonium leaks juxtapose with statistics on handgun-related deaths and the voice of Ishtar: the front, in other words, is everywhere, all times.

And yet each "front" can be read as a discrete unit– a fragment set against other fragments. Inevitably, these fragments generate textual and conceptual gaps, allowing the reader (as opposed to some central, authorial voice) to draw together ostensibly disparate, often dissonant, compositional fields.

In "Devil's Working Overtime" (Section XV), transcriptions of gloom and doom radio sermons and passages on the history of colonialism in the Caribbean lurk among lists of aquatic life and stars mapped onto the page in cornucopial flourish. A tension builds between the sermon-voice, warning of "the Devil you see tween people every day" (180), and the intimate communion between the poet and her son as they name the world around them. As if caught in the cross-fire of dueling world views (paradisal / fallen) the poem tugs between the sensual delight of seeing/touching/naming and the preacher's sinister admonishing that the devil is "everywhere / & workin harder'n every minute" (180). Lists of lush flora and fauna ("Flamingo tongue // foureye butterflyfish // fairy basslet") act as a kind of chant whose rich profusions would be antidote and counter-spell to the preacher's sermon. Eventually all naming drops away, and there is a lovely sense of the poet as mingled with the world she conjures:

> All of a sudden I faced "it"
> took the robe off
> & the garment was a mirror
> of myself
>
> we were one saw my whole self in it
> & faced my whole fish self
>
> (187)

There is an urgent tone in much of *IOVIS II* that mimics (i.e., performs) the very ontological wavering and shifting that the narrator undergoes. It is as if, in the fervor of discovery, the words retained the velocity of their inscription. But this "glorious conjunct" (". . . the garment was a mirror / of myself") that allows the narrator to shift personae is the same rhetorical maneuvering that lurks under the preacher's symbolic configurations of the phenomenal world (woman, snake, water, etc.) as avatar of evil: Jove's dark underbelly of "the devil." As a rhetorical maneuver, the conjunct is not only glorious, but potentially dangerous.

Another danger that *IOVIS* skirts is a simple reversal of oppressive gender and culture dialectics (i.e., female and cultural other = good; male and American culture = bad). This reversal merely perpetuates generalizations asserted in status quo dialectics (i.e., female and cultural other = bad; male and American culture = good).

Ultimately, an epic vision must grapple with the difficulties of establishing archetypes unencumbered by stereotypes, making fragments cohere without any "irritable reaching after fact & reason." The "body poetics" with which Waldman begins *IOVIS* ("One eye reflect[ing] the 'inside,' the other the gorgeous & dark phenomenal world") is also body *politics* (*IOVIS* 2); that is, the "dark phenomenal world" is not merely the opposite of one's own subjectivity, or "inside," but comprises others' subjectivities as well. As Waldman points out, "'Iovis' literally *of Jove* is the possessive case, *owned by Jove*. As well as about him, a weave" (2).

IOVIS is driven by human compassion, as well as an awareness that one writes "in antithetical preparation for disinheritance, betrayal, loss of power" (*IOVIS II* 9). As the limitations of earlier modernist epics have shown, this sense of the ego's limitations is absolutely necessary if the poem is to avoid lapsing into a kind of monomania that eventually sabotages its own vision.

*

A fold can be thought of as a self-interfering system, like a labyrinth's convolutions that signify error's "wandering" within a formal constraint. Within such a pattern, a fold constrains in order to re-disperse, doubling back in order to move forward. Writing can be seen as a fold in which the presence of writing is always posterior and exterior to an anterior and interior "scene" of writing. Thus, each fold of writing would endlessly re-cover what it seeks to recover.

Rachel Blau DuPlessis' *Drafts 15-XXX, The Fold* situates itself within this paradox of covering and recovering, folding back on earlier drafts as acts of "correspondence." Like the notes that correspond to each draft, the earlier writing becomes a scene of reading: not as telos, not to occupy an ideal position of reader-writer, here-there, then-now, but reading the earlier drafts as "conspicuous oracles," fragments "pressed down unfinished overwritten refolded" (28). Thus, each poem acts as a kind of event horizon in which both language and "event" fold and disperse, fuse and scatter:

> Something live from the winds
> that empties "is"

of its simplicities
and pours "it" as libation on the ground.

(67)

One hears Fenollosa's "no nouns in nature" complicated: and no verbs. This "is" is a specific tree, an "oakish life / as such," but "it," felled from a "tilted force pushed through," reverberates through all phenomena, "hard to assimilate" in that "Ragge of verse" in which "hole/hold can sometimes split and pivot" (66).

DuPlessis' use of correspondence (each poem both discrete and continuous), puns, typography, orthography, notation, and focus on the materiality of language and physical conditions of writing/living all contribute to a kind of poetics of the trace: "Writing from the center of, the centers of, otherness / Making otherness central" (*Tabula Rosa* 84), while each center is constantly displaced in an "aura of endlessly welling commentary // folding and looping over" (*Drafts 15-XXX, The Fold* 29).

The face of language is effaced in pun, typo, tongue slip, and error. In "the flattened dialectics of joy," we would go through the threshold of language "quasi-baffled, singing out our little song 'whoo-whee'" (71). But these failures of language are also "the door resisting entry" (69), the desperate trouble (perhaps even horror) "at the heart of poems" (72). We would want of language, perhaps, a kind of Spicer lemon-poem "so concrete and intimate, so oil-acrid," or the "implacable 'cold ashes' / placed precisely on the non-dimensional edge / where underside meets recto/verso / a third space" (72). But this cusp of facing pages "between definite poem / and the wavy registers / from untranslated sensation" may be nothing "in the face of it" (73); that is, in the face of "it," in the cusp of facing, a zero: ( ).

This zero is the paradoxical present-absence and absent-presence at the heart of language that "the pretty poem" wants to fill with eidos, logos, God, nothing. For DuPlessis this is also the heart of matter itself, the fragments that "can never be assimilated" and "the condition of time, going forward athwart" (84).

According to Blanchot, an image is "a limit next to the indefinite" (79). Likewise a cadaver is a kind of limit next to the indefinite. In turn, language-as-image resembles "the strangeness of a cadaver," which resembles (i.e., doubles) the living person it no longer is, and yet is not the living person it once was. In this way, language is profoundly connected with the exigencies of the residual (the dead, debris, fragments of time and materials). These poems (the draft's liminal positioning between "nothing" and "something") seem to hover in this zone between the definite and indefinite, here and there, "is" and "it":

a tenacity, an insistence to remain among remains that insist in "ever-disjunctive / folds" (85).

*

Rarely, in a discussion of Modernist poetry, is the name Laura Riding mentioned. This is due in part to her renunciation of poetry after the 1938 publication of the collected poems (*The Poems of Laura Riding*), as well as her subsequent reluctance to reprint her work, and vehement refusal to play the games of literary professionalism and self-promotion.

Hopefully, this neglect will change with the recent publication of the long-awaited study of language that Riding coauthored with Schuyler B. Jackson: *Rational Meaning: A New Foundation for the Definition of Words* and *Supplementary Essays*. Perhaps *Rational Meaning* will redirect attention away from Riding's "renunciation" of poetry, viewing the book as her sustained commitment to an understanding of the very material foundation of poetry: words and how to make them "fulfill the human being" (*Rational Meaning* 56).*

What's more hopeful is that *Rational Meaning* will revitalize an interest in Riding's poetry. To this end, *A Selection of the Poems of Laura Riding*, which includes roughly half of the poems in the *Collected*, is a good place to begin.

Riding saw poetry as ideally "an uncovering of truth of so fundamental and general a kind that no other name besides poetry is adequate except truth" (*Poems of Laura Riding* 407). Reading *A Selection*, one is able to trace Riding's growing desire for poetry to be an exactitude of utterance, despite her belief that "truth begins where poetry ends" (*Selected Poems: In Five Sets* 15) . From "The World and I":

> This is not exactly what I mean
> Any more than the sun is the sun.
> But how to mean more closely
> If the sun shines but approximately?
> What a world of awkwardness!
>
> (116)

*As Charles Bernstein notes in his introduction to *Rational Meaning*, the book is not only "a treatise on the philosophy of language," but "and *ars poetica*—a 'creative' work rather than a work of linguistics, philosophy or literary criticism as they are professionally practiced" (ix). Thus, one could very well consider this work as both "critical" and "creative." Indeed, as Riding stated in her 1938 preface to *The Poems of Laura Riding*, "the study of the scope of poetry *is* poetry" (409).

According to Riding, an awkwardness in language points to a more general awkwardness in relating to the world itself. There is great integrity in Riding's commitment to knowing "exactly where / Exactly I and exactly the world / Fail to meet by a moment, and a word" (116). This is a crucial point in Riding's work: what is at stake is not merely the relative success of a poem, but truth itself. Until we accept this responsibility of language to truth, we "[m]ust live together as strangers and die—/ A sour love, each doubtful whether / Was ever a thing to love the other" (116).

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—DAN FEATHERSTON

Ralph Maud. *Charles Olson's Reading: A Biography.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996.

The full extent of Olson's legacy has yet to be measured. I imagine the story, when finally told, will be quite dramatic: a major poet who didn't bother to publish most of his work while alive; a vast archive left in the hands of former students, with few instructions; a slow descent into obscurity vis-à-vis the public; a cadre of serious readers, most of them outsiders to prevailing literary and academic institutions; a sizable body of work by followers, all but a fraction unpublished, out of print, invisible. Indeed, while the "Olsonian" poets comprise a substantial group by any standard of judgment—John Clarke, Diane DiPrima, Robert Grenier, Kenneth Irby, Joanne Kyger, Gerrit Lansing, Duncan McNaughton, John Wieners, Fred Wah, to name only a few—no scholar has yet to treat their work as a phenomenon worthy of study in its own right. Characterized in whispers as an all-male "cult," a slavish degradation of Olson's worthy impetus, this odd, unmapped circuit of response has become something of a liability to friend and foe alike.

Nonetheless, since one of Olson's stated goals was "to write a Republic," it's entirely fair and perhaps necessary to judge this poet's achievement by looking at the community of poets, critics, archivists and readers assembled around his work. Even now, however, a quarter century after Olson's death, such a judgment is scarcely possible, not least because the Olsonians' Olson differs so radically from that of the casual reader. For most students of postwar verse, Olson remains a practitioner of the long poem as defined by Pound and Williams; a proponent of organic form who eventually slid into shamanism and excess. The devotees' Olson is by contrast a mercurial scholar whose "curriculum of the soul" evades the limits of the merely poetic. Theirs is a figure who once declared:

> My present purpose is to attack estrangement, to suggest an alternative, to declare another field. I mean, a distinguishable and definable area of experience which has to be called totality, I suggest, simply because it is all of everything there is to know and to feel; and that to inhabit it and to act from and by it takes a discipline as describable and as useful as the area itself.

Prerequisite, then, to a judgment or even understanding of Olson's legacy is a grappling with the poet the Olsonians have taken as their master—a grappling with the full measure of Olson's writings and

relationships and studies—a willingness to set aside, if only momentarily, the commonplace view of Olson's work in favor of a more complex and less literary conception of the project of such key texts as "Proprioception" and "Projective Verse."

Comes now Ralph Maud's magisterial study of Olson as scholar, a bibliography shaped in the manner of Olson's own anarchic syllabi from Black Mountain College and SUNY Buffalo. Charting the course of Olson's insatiable curiosity from boyhood to deathbed, Maud captures like no previous critic his subject's peculiar, Melvillean ability to find his bearings on the margins of his reading, to build an argument, story or history from carefully pieced-together sources, however cryptic their correlation. For Maud, as for Olson, it's the *use* of a book that matters; titles and summaries of contents are by themselves dead facts. In practical terms, this means that Maud's study outstrips the constraints of mere catalogue, to become something both more useful and more unusual than a numbered list of sources.[1] Consider, for instance, the following passage from Maud's last chapter, a careful untangling of Olson's final years of study:

> *15 June 1968.* Received as a gift from Harvey Brown: Cyrus H. Gordon, *Forgotten Scripts* (New York: Basic Books, 1968)—flyleaf: "fr Harv—at Gerrit's date of gathering 1st week out of hospital ...." The date "June 17, 1968" on p.165 denotes Olson's use of phrasing from that page in a poem, "Take the earth in under a single review" .... Further notes indicate Olson used the book on 21 September 1969 ....
>
> *29 June 1968.* Looked again at a small poem beginning "the salmon of Wisdom" and sent it to Robert Kelly .... Olson deleted the old title on the holograph of the poem ("Cuchulain, born of impregnation by a mayfly"), which he owed to Robert Graves's *The White Goddess.* Nevertheless, it reminded him that he had been hankering for a cloth-bound edition of *The White Goddess* and he requested one the same day from Grolier Bookshop. ... Jumping from Graves's tripartite goddess to the etymological information on the "Fates" in *Webster's 2nd International Dictionary,* and thence to the World-Tree in Turville-Petre's *Myth and Religion of the North,* Olson wrote a prose piece dated "...July 1st, 1968" and published separately with the title *"CLEAR, SHINING WATER," DeVries says* ....

At moments like this, Maud's ability to re-imagine the process of composition recalls John Irwin's similar ability vis-à-vis another master

of forgotten script—Edgar Allan Poe. The resultant book has a structural ingenuity unmatched in recent memory. The prose is clear and strong; the portrait of Olson vivid; the information compelling.[2]

As biography, Maud's book is not quite so satisfying. Stripping away the shamanism and excess, eschewing as much as possible the extra-bibliographic side of Olson's life, Maud's painstaking account of Olson's habits of reading and composition tell only half the story. The other half—the monstrous behavior first recorded by Charles Boer—is equally important, and until the two halves are integrated, Olson himself will remain something of a mystery.[3] Already in the mid '50s, Olson had defined his teachings as "how to live, by Charles Olson"; a decade later, he scribbled the following elaboration: "how to live as a / single natural being / the dogmatic nature of / (order of) / experience."[4] Heretofore, only devotees have taken this teaching seriously. Only now, perhaps, in an era of cultural studies, is it possible to see in these extra-literary directives a worthy topic for investigation.

Earlier I compared Olson to Melville and Poe, giving in to the urge to historicize Olson as a literary figure. A more useful comparison would be to Foucault, to whom Olson bears a more than passing resemblance. Both began by aping and then mastering an earlier style of argumentation (phenomenology for Foucault; literary criticism for Olson) and both soon pushed beyond such limits, inspired by the radicality of human physical experience. Both subsequently adopted the stance of "archaeologist" in order to explore this radicality more profoundly. Both also retained a clear sense of their theoretical and ideological goals despite immersion in a welter of historical detail. By attending closely to just this immersion in detail, Maud documents as never before Olson's attempt to transform poetry into a social and political enterprise—in Olson's terms, an "attack" on "estrangement," a "discipline" of "totality." As a consequence, it is now possible to propose a reading analogous to such recent studies as Daniel Tiffany's *Radio Corpse: Imagism and the Cryptaesthetic of Ezra Pound,* or Jacqueline Rose's *The Haunting of Sylvia Plath*—theoretically savvy, holistic approaches which begin but don't end in the sphere of the literary.

NOTES

1. See, e.g., the prototype for Maud's book, "Olson's Reading: A Preliminary Report," compiled by George F. Butterick and published in the first seven issues of *Olson: The Journal of the Charles Olson Archives,* 1974–1977 (an alphabetical list in the manner of Merton M. Sealts, Jr., *Melville's Reading: A Checklist of Books Owned and Borrowed).* Or compare Maud's fractal narrative with Jack L. Capps' far simpler approach in *Emily Dickinson's Reading 1836–1886*—a simplicity largely due to paucity of information.

2. For those not sated by *Olson's Reading,* I recommend subscription to Maud's own *Minutes of the Charles Olson Society* (1104 Maple Street, Vancouver, B.C., Canada V6J 3R6; series subscription $25; back issues $2.50), an invaluable compendium of information, documentation and polemic. Contents include Olson's correspondence with Robin Blaser, Robert Payne and Albert Glover, background on the Berkeley Poetry Conference of 1965, brief memoirs by Harry Levin, Albert Cook, Mac Hammond and Richard Wilbur, and a useful exchange of letters with Marjorie Perloff regarding Olson's debts to Pound and Williams.
3. See Boer, *Charles Olson in Connecticut,* first published in 1975. Tom Clark's 1991 biography and Maud's own *Minutes of the Charles Olson Society* have gone far toward enlarging the documentary record, but Boer's memoir remains the best attempt at integration, at a reading of Olson's life and work as the twin aspects of a single activity.
4. See *A Bibliography on America for Ed Dorn* and "A Curriculum of the Soul."

—BENJAMIN FRIEDLANDER

***Intimate Chronicles* by Christopher Middleton (Riverdale-on-Hudson, NY: The Sheep Meadow Press, 1996). 94 pp.**
***Clean & Well Lit: Selected Poems 1987–1995* by Tom Raworth (New York: Roof Books, 1996). 106 pp.**
***Selected Poems* by Douglas Oliver (Jersey City, NJ: Talisman House, 1996). 135 pp.**

"both fortunate & un-
—to have lived these past thirty years
when so many delightful poets
have been writing so many terrific poems:
there was so much to read
there wasn't much time left to write"

—AH, in: *The Poet's Notebook* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995, p. 99)

—and even less time to come up with even semi-coherent responses to what there was to read! Plus, considering the complications involved in presuming to say anything at all about poetry at a time when

discourse on the subject has become either theoreticized and specialized (in the journals), or generalized and purely gestural (in what passes for reviews in print media addressed to the public at large, such as the London and New York TLSs), a humble practitioner is bound to feel some trepidation 'daring' to 'review' three books of poetry of more than passing interest he was glad to find in 1996. May the following remarks be taken as made by one who has been "quite content to live on the Poets' Reservation" (Austrian poet Friederike Mayröcker, quoted on the jacket of her latest book *Notizen auf einem Kamel,* 1996), without any particular ambition to cross its borders into adjacent territories of discourse.

The back cover of Christopher Middleton's *Intimate Chronicles* quotes (genuine) "British critic T.J.C. Harris" as saying that "Middleton is one of the most extraordinary and extraordinarily neglected English poets." I wholeheartedly agree with the first half of that sentence. The second half, however, begs the question: neglected by whom? In my personal experience of *la vie littéraire* in London (1958 through 1967), what passed for official "recognition" then—in the pages of the *London Times Literary Supplement, Encounter, The London Magazine,* etc.—was still as biased in favor of a culturally 'genetic' stratum of poets as in Ezra Pound's early days there. Scanning the pages of Richard Caddel's lively UK poetry "listserve" on the World Wide Web (british-poets-request@mailbase.ac.uk), I can see that the situation really has not changed much in the past three decades: Last October, Iain Sinclair, the editor of *Conductors of Chaos,* a 488-page anthology of non-"mainstream" British poets, received the same dismissive-aggressive treatment in TLS pages as that meted out to Michael Horovitz for his *Children of Albion* back in 1970: "hideous extremes. . .charmless mannerism. . .gobbledygook. . . ." If it does not cleave to the post-Hardy/Frost/Larkin line of wearily ironic pseudo-epiphany, it ain't what "we" think of as "poetry." Broadly speaking, it seems to be a matter of (mostly male) persons going to the same schools, then on to the same colleges, bonding against what used to be called "hearties" (= insensitive jocks), "discovering" the same lineages over and over again, and ending up in the ranks of reviewers for Establishment outlets.*) The recent award of the Order of the British Empire to Liverpool stand-up comedian Roger McGough "for services to poetry"

* There are, of course, parallel phenomena on the U.S. poetry rez: see, for instance, (presumably pseudonymous) Dimitia Smith's attempt to classify the strains of contemporary American poetry in the New York Times Sunday Magazine ("The Poetry Pantheon," 19 February 1995). In her article, she labels Derek Walcott and Czeslaw Milosz "neo-Colonialists," calls Paul Hoover and Ann Lauterbach "Language Poets" and Philip

is only one more instance of the British Establishment's condescending and willfully obtuse view of the art.

In the early to mid-Sixties, a pleasantly turbulent time in London, there were glimmerings of an opening up of that view in some quarters—due, in part, to an influx of U.S. visitors of the New American Poetry persuasion. Christopher Middleton's first mature collection, *torse 3* (Longmans, 1962) and Tom Raworth's *The Relation Ship* (Goliard, 1966) were major occasions of astonishment and delight at that time. Middleton's poetry of

> . . .a surface generated
> by a moving straight line
> which at every instant is turning,
> in some plane or other through it,
> about some point or other
> in its length

—from the OED definition that is the book's epigraph was mercurial, erudite, playful, yet tough in ways far removed from either sour Larkinism or mod hipsterism. The poetic 'elsewheres' in *torse 3* certainly indicated a desire to leave behind such (then) dominant modes, but it was their diachronicity and courage in the face of post-WW II's terrible beauty that gave them their particular edge. Raworth's elliptical verbal cinematography, on the other hand, signaled an even more radical break with pastoral epiphanics, in its absolute lack of the self-consciousness that had still affected the work of otherwise notable maverick predecessors David Gascoyne and Philip O'Connor ("I can't *believe* I'm doing this, here in *England")* and still lingered in the work of contemporaries (among them Roger McGough, OBE).

Now it's thirty years later for all of us musketeers, and as Ted Berrigan was fond of noting, a year in a late twentieth century poet's life may easily equal ten in other cosmic time zones. . . The new work

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Levine a "Magical Realist," and leaves one with the impression that all American poets of note are either members of quaint pseudo-British clubs in Manhattan, or of gangs of raucous declamatory types hanging out in cafes in that same borough (with a few elders in retirement in Hawaii or Minnesota). Most of them are male; women who cannot be squeezed into the "Earth Mothers" or "Sex, Gender, Politics" categories are simply off the map. In a country dumbed down by television, where "'poet' is almost as laughable a word as 'liberal'" (Jack Kroll in *Newsweek,* 1-9-95), this 'survey' merely reinforced sad stereotypes and made one suspect that the author's work as an "observer of poets" had not involved anything as retro as actually *reading* any poetry. Witness also Helen Vendler's recent dismissal of Mina Loy—no bad girls allowed in *this* canonical establishment.

in Christopher Middleton's *Intimate Chronicles,* "'late work' by traditional measure" as the back cover notes, is strikingly youthful in the best sense: after a great many books of poems, essays, and brilliant translations of German poetry and prose, and thirty years spent teaching comparative literature in Austin, Texas, this poet's moves are, if anything, even faster and more precise:

UPON SAINT CRISPIN'S DAY

Aha, said he,
    Don't tell me you too
Keep somebody in mind,
    Who, when he squares,
On top of the heap now,
    His shoulders
To uncork
    Another wine bottle,
Holds his breath,
    Listens to the swish
Of arrows darkening
    The sky, and recalls
His forefather, the way
    He drew the longbow
At Agincourt.

Makes you shiver, eh? And then it makes you *question* that shiver. . . In the book, this is followed by a monologue in the persona of Paris ("Actually, folks, I am a stocky half-Hittite, / Dealer in used chariots and standard spears"), and then by one of the most stunning poems of the collection, "Ballad of the Putrefaction"—too long to quote here *in toto,* but here are a few lines, for a taste:

. . .
The poem of hateful persons hot in his mind
He met the girl whose work was to roll in creosote
Himself he wanted to set fire to the hateful persons
Nobodies governing nations without any sense of what's what
Not victors but victims of their spooks and greeds
. . .
Again he saw the squat bronze tractor woman
Straighten her headscarf in the hotel garden
Their monuments he murmured their long knives
Hack out the tongues of nightingale persons

Their slug fingers sign contracts for weapons
. . .
But again it is me the creosote girl who interrupts
We have escaped across many adjoining rooms
And arrive in a crypt where police wagons park
. . .
What if I doubt himself more deeply now than he can

Reminiscent of both Celan's *Todesfuge* and Notley's *The Descent of Alette,* this is one for the Great Inferno Anthology.

Intimate Chronicles insists on the poet's right to frame his or her work in whatever mode comes to hand—even, it seems, sometimes preferring the supposedly 'outdated' ones: travelogue, poem-"about"-music, poem-"about"-work of art, poem with classical reference, etc. As Middleton says in his essay "The Question of Novelty" (in *The Pursuit of the Kingfisher,* 1983):

> Even in a relatively coherent society the levels of human reality intersect at odd angles and are stratified across loops and slopes. Those angles, loops and slopes are different warps of time in which people actually live, participating in the same epoch only tangentially and under sexual compulsion and economic coercion... Asynchronicity is the key, I am guessing, to any significant renewal, as act or event, personal or social. . . But it is altogether enigmatic, how the rare bird called 'new' can escape before being crushed, when the strata, enormous fluxions of time constantly solidifying into blocks, crash and grind against another.

In the "crash and grind" of our time, Christopher Middleton's subtle mind, ear, and eye do "stroke the living air, to make it hum" *(On a Photograph of Chekhov).*

Tom Raworth's *Clean & Well Lit: Selected Poems 1987-1995* is a most welcome companion volume to *Tottering State: Selected and New Poems 1963-1983* (The Figures, 1984) and *Eternal Sections* (Sun & Moon Press, 1993). Driven by the "high speed submicroscopic / impetus" Middleton recognized early on in a poem dedicated to Raworth ("On Mozart's Birthday" in *The Lonely Suppers of W.V. Balloon,* 1975), these may well be the "fastest lines of the West," as Charles Bernstein has it; but no matter how fast they seem to be coming at you, their paratactic narrative is one that not only deserves but demands rereading:

. . .
simply is no before
slipping into gradual decline
planets fall from a tree
not to marry marks
facing great uncertainties
anxious to save money
a half-explored land
on the wrong trajectory
hidden in mist
where the outlines
seemed broken puzzles
gliding about the stage
of an iris as it opened
significance was yet to come
. . .

As this fourteen-line excerpt from a ten-page poem ("Blue Screen") demonstrates, 'paratactic' does not quite describe what goes on here; 'meta-paratactic' might come closer. It is often impossible to know where one phrasal unit ends and the next one begins; the lines generate a spinning and spiraling progression through a scenery in motion—an effect created by quarrying intrinsically 'lazy' 'public' language, including that of the media, fragmenting and refracting this material, then combining it with what can also be read as 'private.'

There "simply is no before," or after, and "significance was"—still is, always—"yet to come." Individual lines retain their modular quality, which is (I think) to say that they might work just as well in reverse:

. . .
significance was yet to come
of an iris as it opened
gliding about the stage
seemed broken puzzles
where the outlines
hidden in mist
on the wrong trajectory
. . .

I once heard Raworth read another long poem ("Catacoustics" if memory serves) in line-by-line reverse from beginning to end. And the poem 'held up,' as they say: no problem. This curious modular

Sprechgesang quality relates many of Raworth's poems to exploratory contemporary music in the Cage, Glass, and jazz traditions. "Out of a Sudden (Absence)," dedicated to the memory of Swiss-Italian poet Franco Beltrametti, graces the endpapers of this volume together with the music written for it by Steve Lacy. Its progression is representative of another, often submerged, strain of Raworth's poetry, the Shaker-like gift to be simple (not to be confused with simplistic):

OUT OF A SUDDEN

the alphabet wonders
what it should do
paper feels useless
colors lose hue

while all musical notes
perform only in blue

a lombardy poplar
shadows the ground
drifted with swansdown
muffling the sound

at the tip of the lake
of the road to the south

above in the night sky
scattered by chance
stars cease their motion
poppies don't dance

in the grass standing still
by the path no-one walks

To my ear, this echoes and matches some of the finest of Samuel Beckett's French poems (particularly those Beckett himself did not put into English) or the work of Thomas A. Clark (a Scottish poet too little-known this side of the Atlantic); it strikes a note of genuinely Modernist blues. The "he," too, in many of these poems, comes off as a classically 'Modern' figure, shadowy yet considerably more present than personal pronouns (if any) in most contemporary work: "pretending he was a robot / respectable looking / legs hot and itchy . . . wandering among

dogs / he is politely relieved of his wallet . . . he realized the image of a falling body / came from film / a slightly altered version. . ." ("Out of the Picture"). There is always a sense of *adventure,* not only in terms of concealed or fragmented narrative but also as an integral part of the stroboscopic and powerfully phanopoeic loops generated by the poems. And Raworth orchestrates all of this with stunning economy: these poems don't just *look* lean.

One of the epigraphs in the book is by Lord Byron: "But I have been familiar with ruins too long to dislike desolation." I don't doubt that the ruins to which Byron referred were not the decorative ones in Romantically landscaped gardens: with two hundred and fifty wars under its belt, *this* staggering century has surpassed Byron's in ruin production (those in Sarajevo are only the most obviously visible), and it is likely to create quite a few more before it vacates the stage to its grimly smiling successor. Raworth's poems, while fully conscious of what "a terminally depressed / board game" ("Emptily") the present 'world order' is, still celebrate the planet's ever odd beauty as perceived by the human brain:

> machines talk to themselves
> maintain a very persistent
> buzzing as the signal
> ends in a dramatic freeze
> close to the border
> on a street with a few orange trees
>
> ("The Vein")

In a preface to his *Selected Poems,* Douglas Oliver makes an important statement, important not only to his own work but in my opinion also to the total endeavor of poetry:

> [But] the everyday lives of even the most brilliant among us have their simple and direct sides as well as philosophical, comic as well as tragic, romantic as well as classical, loving as well as satirical, baldly puzzled as well as cannily hermeneutic, cross-cultural as well as islanded-cultural. A poet's work might reflect that real variousness and avoid government by any persuasive definition of human consciousness or by any faddish narrowing of genres, forms or subject-matter. Without my claiming a cent for the results, that's what my own work tries to do.

The range implied by such a program is made manifest in this tightly packed selection from thirty years of brilliant, sturdy, quirky, always *concerned* work (in poetry as well as in fiction, essays, and the groundbreaking critical study *Poetry and Narrative in Performance,* 1989). The politics of our historical circle of the Inferno, defined by "Western" corporate imperialism and Stalinist slave-stateism, are not apt to arouse poetic emotions to be recollected in tranquility: it takes a lifetime to find ways to deal with them, one's own complicity in them, and the sheer old Conradian horror of it all. Doug Oliver's way has been to reconsider, and rebuild, models of the epic, and the *Selected* contains a number of these works, either in their entirety *(The Diagram Poems, The Infant and the Pearl)* or in excerpts *(An Island That Is All the World, Penniless Politics, A Salvo for Africa). The Diagram Poems,* which take their subject matter from news reports on the Tupamaro rebellion in Uruguay, introduce visual elements into the text: literal diagrams, of an aspect both comical and threatening. *The Infant and the Pearl,* a tremendous response to what Thatcherism has wrought, "follows the prosody of the anonymous medieval classic, *Pearl,* with a few tricks to lighten it for the modern ear." *An Island* ... alternates poems with moving prose passages of autobiography, and the more recent *Penniless Politics,* "a satire upon the world's most powerful nation whose voters just don't vote," and *A Salvo for Africa* combine various rhetorics of verse and prose. Recent shorter poems against the backdrop of Paris, where Oliver now lives, weave around the themes of individual and universal existence in a manner a little like an updated Apollinaire:

> These thoughts in purple knots of cloud
> dash down false lightning flashes like
> neon signs above the glistening
> Grands Boulevards, illuminating streetwise
> melodramas not without beauty when
> the will grows weary of the nightlong life
> and you go walking.
>
> ("Well of Sorrows in Purple Tinctures")

It is, however, impossible to do Oliver's work justice by lifting brief quotes out of their context. The great pleasures it provides are embedded in what (especially after reading, say, Raworth) might seem a very leisurely kind of verbal progression: as in much of Bertolt Brecht's or Edward Dorn's work, the words follow thoughts and perceptions emanating from an "I" that, while fully aware of being just another construct, examines and questions that construct in its expe-

riential and existential passage. Thus, 'leisurely' does not cut it, at all: as Oliver notes in a prose passage excerpted from *An Island. . .*, "The gravity of a poem lies in its whole form . . . it is its ineffable nature." While this statement comes from a meditation on performance, it also describes the author's firm belief, evident throughout the work, that it is possible, still possible, as possible as ever, to represent one's world in terms that include overt ethical decisions and judgments—and that the work then becomes an autonomous extension of *who one is,* true to an intention that may be seen as larger and more inclusive than one "self." It occurs to me that if I were asked for a personal definition of "visionary," I would say that s/he is "one who participates in the thought of the world"—not going off into prescriptive Utopian imaginings or "systems," but engaging what s/he finds with the fullest possible range of intelligence and emotion at hand. In "Trink," a poem dedicated to Paul Celan's widow Gisèle Lestrange, Oliver salutes another Parisian exile, Heinrich Heine with these affectionate lines:

> . . .
> remember, oh remember how he lay
> crippled on his eight-year grave and in his wine
> saw his young self drinking in a tavern
> mocking the pain in his spine; yet he never
> ceased his songs of "joy and fire" and wrote
> of Richard Lion-Heart riding in English forests,
> free from Austrian prisons.

And with that, I raise my glass of Apollinaris mineral water to these three walking forests of English, and wish them and their lucky readers many more years of The Work in The Life.

—ANSELM HOLLO

Daniel C. Noel. *The Soul of Shamanism.* New York: Continuum, 1997, 252 pages, index.

Daniel C. Noel's *The Soul of Shamanism* would be difficult to classify under reigning academic rubrics. In terms of the contemporary university, Noel's work is perhaps excessively interdisciplinary. The book ranges freely over topics usually consigned to separate departments of anthropology, psychology, literature, and religion. If "cultural studies" was truly concerned with culture as a process which has been under development since at least the Paleolithic era, then perhaps *The Soul of Shamanism* would be properly classified as cultural studies. Alas, the currently-hot multidisciplinary field is concerned almost exclusively with interpreting the production and consumption of commodities under capitalism rather than with any long-term phenomenon like shamanism. Noel's work, then, is only marginally connected to current academic practices, and therein lies its strength. Noel, a scholar of religion and literature who has taught mostly at Goddard College, has taken advantage of his fringe position to write a book almost unclassifiable, if not unpalatable, to the current academic scene.

Early on, Noel announces that he is writing this book for both "scholars" and "seekers," which means he has to be rigorous enough to suit the former, while providing a compelling narrative for the latter (who will be reading the book out of personal, not professional, prerogatives). In general, he succeeds, though it's likely some scholars would prefer more detailed critiques of such anthropologists as Clifford Geertz, James Clifford, and Mary Louise Pratt, while "seekers" might like to hear more about his visits to Michael Harner's "shamanism workshops" or about his pursuit of Merlin as a central figure for his personal mythology. In fact, some seekers are bound to be disappointed by his conclusion that, basically, Westerners are denied access to "indigenous" forms of shamanism, and thus need to direct the recent interest in "New Shamanism" towards "deliteralizing the Western fantasies of neoshamanism without dismissing the imaginal realities it represents." That is to say, "shamanic awareness is only available to Westerners in an imaginal shamanism" (211). This will be disturbing to some "seekers," especially those who shell out nonimaginal money for workshops and for periodicals like *Shaman's Drum.*

The Soul of Shamanism, though, justifies this conclusion. While the intellectual underpinnings of this book are derived from Jung and (as the reliance on the notion of "the imaginal" suggests) James Hillman, the narrative itself derives more from Noel's experiences as a scholar and seeker. Thus the central figures in *The Soul of Shamanism,*

those whom Noel credits with giving rise to the New Shamanism in the first place, comprise a rather idiosyncratic cast of characters. Merlin, Carlos Castaneda, Mircea Eliade, and Ronald Sukenick are among the many who make cameo appearances in Noel's book. Noel's search for a usable Shamanic past, a shamanism accessible to Westerners which does not appropriate and colonize the practices of other cultures in its attempt to provide a quick fix for what is missing in modern Western experience, leads him to look for a "pre-Christian wisdom" that constitutes "the otherness in our own history" (65). Rather than exploring the initiation rites of Siberian shamans or the use of plant hallucinogens among the Desana in South America, however, Noel looks to what is closer to hand. Thus, Merlin figures as "a Celtic shaman of sorts with a special relation to animals . . . and to the forests and springs of Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Cornwall, and Brittany" (214-15). Noel briefly explores the role of Merlin in the popular imagination, but focuses more on the Merlin story as it functions in his personal mythology. Merlin, in short, is the model for a post-Jungian imaginal shamanism, an archetype that embodies the complexities and contradictions of a new shamanism. The figure of Merlin returns, says Noel, in popular stories as well is in psychoanalytic and mythic inquiry, and should be attended to by anyone interested in a Western shamanism.

Perhaps the central figure in this book, though, looming as large as Merlin, is Carlos Castaneda. Shortly after the appearance of Castaneda's fourth Don Juan book, Noel prepared a monograph on Castaneda's work for Warner's "Writers of the Seventies" series. The book never appeared, and Noel suggests that Castaneda's agent or even Castaneda himself blocked publication. For his part, Noel was a major participant in the debates of the period over the authenticity of Don Juan (as were Joyce Carol Oates, Donald Barthelme, Ron Sukenick, Mary Douglass, and Richard De Mille, to name some). Noel is quite good at recreating the intellectual and cultural context in which this debate occurred, and from reading Noel's account, it is easy to see why such acclaim was initially bestowed upon Castaneda, followed by the more critical attention his work eventually received. The debate, obviously, had to do with whether Don Juan existed, and if so, did he actually say and do the things Castaneda attributes to him. The resolution of this debate ultimately comes down to a value judgment which itself pertains wholly to the issue of classification: Should librarians shelf Castaneda's works under "Anthropology," or should they put them in "fiction"? In other words, Castaneda's critics (especially Richard De Mille) saw danger in blurring the distinctions between fact (anthropology in particular and the social sciences in general) and fiction (literature in particular and imaginative writing in general). Such a challenge to the

reigning sense of value (mirrored in the relative prestige of the academic disciplines) would put us on dangerous, unstable ground, and this, Noel suggests, is precisely where neoshamanism should be.

Was Castaneda's work a fabrication? Noel is evasive on this issue, but eventually concedes that the work is a hoax. This does not, however, lead Noel to the conclusion that the work is without value, and to justify this position, Noel explores briefly the fictive nature of ethnography and the power of experimental fictions. Noel's reading of "shamanovelists" (like Ron Sukenick) and "Shamanthropologists" (Castaneda, Harner, and Joan Halifax) is informed by a sophisticated grasp of James Hillman's work on "the imaginal." In fact, Noel's work on the reading fictive discourses constitutes the intellectual backbone and the theoretical heart of the book, and here Noel is at his most interesting. Essentially, his conclusion, mentioned earlier, that an "authentic" shamanism is inaccessible to the West is based on the premise that "the soul of the West's idea of shamanism is not factual at all, but fantastic, fictive, a work of the imagination" (37). Thus, the indigenous shamanism some Westerners dream of encountering is itself a product of the imagination, a "theoretical construct" as we would say in the academy. Which doesn't mean that shamanism doesn't exist. Only that our understanding of it is a product of our imagination. Now, Hillman—not exactly the easiest writer to read—helps to provide Noel with an explanation here. To assume access to an indigenous shamanic practice is, to Noel, to take shamanism "literally" and thus to subject it to the "scientific skepticism" and "scientific literalism" of the post-Enlightenment west. It is, in short, to be a fundamentalist, whereas an imaginal shamanism remains more open to the experience and its various meanings.

The word "fundamentalist" refers to one who takes a text to have only one meaning, a person who reads simplistically. The act of reading is important to Noel's quest for an authentic shamanism, for, to Noel, the book functions metaphorically as a shaman's drum. As he puts it, "Westerners might find a positive power for themselves in their own practice of mindful imagining, including the imagining that goes on while books are being read" (38). And later, Noel asserts that "acts of reading and writing are more central to the rise and future possibilities of neoshamanism than we had probably realized. We likewise have discovered that what is being written and read. . . offers a bridge between scientific literalism and what Hillman refers to as the middle region of soulful imagining" (123-23). Hence Noel's interest not only in figures of legend like Merlin but also in fabricators like Carlos Castaneda, Ron Sukenick, and Mircea Eliade (a scholar of shamanism *and* a novelist). Experimental fictions and fictionalized field notes, argues

Noel, fulfill the "imaginal" function required for neoshamanism. By now it should be clear that "imaginal" does not mean something is simply made up, but rather, as Hillman applies the term, it marks a refusal to draw a firm distinction between "the *real* as factual and the *imaginary* as unreal." Such a refusal seems central to the act of reading, and Noel seeks to extend it to other acts of the imagination as well.

If I have any problems with *The Soul of Shamanism,* it stems from Noel's relative neglect of poetry and poetics. Now, because this book is the result of a personal inquiry (as all books are: Noel is just more up front about it), it reflects more openly the tastes and interests of the author. Clearly, in terms of experimental writing, Noel's inclinations lead him to fiction more than to poetry. In fact, the only poetry quoted in *The Soul of Shamanism* is three lines from Wallace Stevens, and even that is in relation to Sukenick's critical study of the poet. Keats is mentioned (an aside about "the vale of soul-making"), as is Ginsberg. Also, as is to be expected, Jerome Rothenberg is quoted—but only from a dust jacket for a book by Joan Halifax! To be fair, Noel then devotes half a paragraph to a description of *The Technicians of the Sacred,* but given Noel's interest in the relationship of creative literature to shamanism, one would expect him to have a field day with the various practices designated by the term "ethnopoetics." Eliade himself writes at the end of *Shamanism,* that "the shaman's pre-ecstatic euphoria is constituted one of the universal sources of lyric poetry," so one could expect Noel to devote more time to the role of the poetic in devising a neoshamanic practice. To be fair, however, it's his book. Furthermore, readers of periodicals like *Sulfur* should have no trouble drawing upon their experience with and knowledge of the world's poetries to reach their own conclusions.

Finally, *The Soul of Shamanism* is a complex, multifaceted work and thus is hard to pin down. In fact, one of the strongest features of the book, one which is impossible to convey in the space of a brief review, is that it enacts what it describes. At one point, Noel quotes a passage from Sukenick's early novel, *Out:* "I want to write a book like a cloud that changes as it goes." Like Sukenick's cloud, Noel's book also changes as it goes. One moment it is a scholarly critique of postmodern anthropology as exemplified by the collection edited by James Clifford and George Marcus, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography,* and the next moment it is a polemic arguing that much of what anthropologists disdain in New Age versions of shamanism actually has its roots in academic anthropology. Soon, the work becomes an autobiographical account of a trip to Jung's house in Switzerland or of a journey to one of Merlin's alleged haunts. At times, in fact, I found myself doubting certain events in Noel's narrative,

wondering if what he was passing off as factual was really fictive (or rather, imaginal). Was there really a "Writers of the Seventies" series, or is this a Borgesian invention? Did he actually talk to Carlos Castaneda on the phone, or is Castaneda as much a product of Noel's imagination as Don Juan was for Castaneda? The doubt that gives rise to these questions, though, is essential to understanding *The Soul of Shamanism.* That is why Noel at one point (p. 175) quotes Sukenick on Castaneda to illustrate a point made by James Hillman in one of his works. Writes Sukenick: "Don Juan shows us we live in fictions . . . and we live best when we learn to master the art," for as Hillman puts it, "a 'healed consciousness' lives fictionally." Noel's ideal neoshamanism would begin by acknowledging this point.

—DAVID ZAUHAR

In an Eskimo prose poem told by Inugpasugjuk, the inhabitants of a floating house run out of blubber for their lamps & begin burning snow; a man from a nearby village comes to visit, & when he exclaims "look, they are burning snow in their lamps, snow can burn," the lamps go out. This poem (which appears in both editions of Jerome Rothenberg's ethnopoetic anthology *Technicians of the Sacred)* might serve as an illuminating commentary on Rothenberg's recent collection of poetry. *Seedings & Other Poems* (New Directions, 1996) is a floating house illumined with burning snow. As a reader coming to evaluate this book, I feel a lot like the man who shouted "look, snow can burn." The title poem is an elegy dedicated to, & inspired by, Robert Duncan. "Seedings'" seeds are the words of the dead. The quote from Ernst Cassirer's *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* heading Duncan's essay "The Truth and Life of Myth" ("if all reality is taken only as it is given in the immediate impression. . .then a dead man indeed still 'is,' even though his sensory-material existence may have been replaced by a disembodied shadow existence") might be grafted to "Seedings." "How it opens me/ to

further words, new/ definitions, as I see you sitting there, old friend; alive, to hear my stammer." The elegy reflects solemnly on mortality and life's illusions ("if there is nothing after death/ then there was nothing before death") without becoming stilted. It's a fine poem, but the real gem of this New Directions' collection is the section entitled *Improvisations.* The notion of improvisation conjures up a lot of context, Thelonious Monk in fez or skullcap hunched over a keyboard searching some slippery epistrophy of erratic and unpredictable patterns, actors on a stage shouting "hey! give us some words & we'll do a play around it," Pollock's action painting, Kandinsky's numinous incandescence. To improvise is to stand outside time ("extempore") and let happen whatever happens when it happens; it is to be entirely in the moment. To respond to impulse, rather than plan, incorporate both in one's anatomy: structure is bone, impulse is blood. It is to relax control, to stand receptively and openly to forces outside oneself & within oneself. "The fast take is a good sign that you're hooked up to some source of power, some source of energy," observed Jack Spicer. Coltrane's sweeping, three-on-one chord approach comes naturally to mind, that polymetric pattern of numerous triplets the Yoruba people call the *konkola* rhythm & its equivalent in poetic expression ("the sound of tiny sparks") conjuring indeterminate and nonreferential riddles, a dynamism breaking up the inertia of language habits and promoting the palpability of signs. Lines such as "Remove an eye there is no darkness but there is always darkness," from "Improvisation No. 10, Forgetting," evince the mystical resonance of Edmond Jabès' rabbinical peregrinations. "Jabès' attempts to reveal the hidden depths of strangeness and the decentering power of alterity found in all writing," observes Richard Stamelman, is consonant to the feeling of estrangement that flavors Rothenberg's *Improvisations.* The Kabbalah calls it "the Breaking of the Vessels," a damage done to the deity. Nietzsche's *die ewige Wunde des Daseins,* the eternal wound of being. The *Improvisations* promote healing through verbal intensity (dithyramb, "semantic impertinence") an accretion of nouns building a network of metaphoric relationships, much like the "hidden revelation" of Yoruba incantation, in which the powers of ingredients are both revealed and simultaneously concealed in the construction of the medicine and in the construction of the incantation itself. The poetry confronts and evades simultaneously because it is *of* and *not of* this world. It is a form of enchantment; it posits its own self-enclosed area ("the birds circle a tree in never increasing numbers") which is withdrawn from the context of profane existence. Paradox and dissociative metonymy, as in "Improvisation No. 5, Gaugin's Freeways"—"calves & clavicles," "a string of frozen fires"—incinerate the bonds of

scientific rationalism and fuse an original unity with Being. "Measurable deflections in the magnetic field," word felt as word and not mere referral to something else, enables poet and auditor to build new relations between the things they name, the power which specific ingredients possess when they are combined together. It is an order of acute perception born from a spontaneous organization, like the half-step intervals in Monk's "Ruby, My Dear," a clustering of notes which gives rise to a feeling of chromaticism, a work cohering according to its own necessity. The result is a fresh, astonishing lucidity, things as they really are, a blurring of distinction between human cognition and nature. "In my lungs a universe is brought to heel," intones line no. 9 of No. 10. *Seedings'* other three sections *(Twentieth Century Unlimited, An Oracle for Delfi, & 14 Stations)* are a mixed bag of the spare & paratactic, derivative & peripatetic. A creditable (& credible) McClure imitation ("Prologomena to a Poetics"), an homage to Lorca ("Lorca Variation 34, A Book of Hours") "Altar Pieces," & a slide show of Minoan culture ("two breasts in gold: gold eyes," "hands raised to heads–to show distress"). "14 Stations" is a series of 14 poems "written to accompany Arie Galles's monumental charcoal drawings derived from World War II aerial views of the principal Nazi extermination camps–each with an attendant railroad station–known even then to have been the sites of holocaust." The problem–& it is a huge one–is how to aestheticize, & thus preserve in memory, something as horrific as the holocaust? In *The Brothers Karamazov,* Dostoyevsky relates the newspaper story of a girl who is beaten by her parents, forced to eat her own excrement, & kept in an outhouse in freezing cold during an entire night. It is an horrific account, the sort of thing that makes you squirm to be a human being, & yet it is wholly pertinent to Dostoyevsky's material, & masterfully written. Poetry is different; it is inherently a form of exaltation ("language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree"). Rothenberg applies an "objectification" by turning to *gematria,* traditional Hebrew numerology, as a way to determine the words and phrases that would come into the poems. "It is my hope," writes Rothenberg, "that this small degree of objective chance will not so much mask feeling or meaning as allow them to emerge."

This is a good year for numinous poetry; a good year for reclaiming the sacred. A good year for *duende. The Unknown Federico Garcia Lorca* (Atlas Press, 1996) edited & translated by John London, is a compelling exhumation of little known Lorca manuscripts. The title is a bit fantastical (an unknown Lorca would be something akin to finding a dinosaur buried in one's backyard, or a drugstore on the dark side of the moon) but not entirely misleading: this slim collection of dialogues, dramatic projects, unfinished plays & a filmscript *(Trip to the Moon,*

written during Lorca's stay in New York from June 1929 to March 1930) is calculated, in part, to dispel Lorca's image as a "colorful, castanet-clicking gypsy with a tragic, social conscience," the martyred "professional Andalusian" assassinated by anti-Republican forces in 1936, and advance the work of a "lucid, mystical, and sometimes irreverent" poet with philosophical interests, not at all above using crude, farcical humor in their dramatization. As the poet himself claims of these strange dialogues, they are "highly profound by dint of their sheer superficiality." Lorca's avante-garde humor compares favorably with that of the surrealists and Italian futurists, and *Dialogue of the Two Snails* (featuring a white snail, young lady, black snail, & a rat) which is entirely silent, except for the stage directions, anticipates Samuel Beckett's *Breath.* But ultimately to compare Lorca to anything outside the insomnia of silk or Saturn's rings is a frivolous & pointless exercise, like taking a picture of a postcard. Suffice it to say these little plays & dialogues are droll, quirky canapés of phenomenological pungency, each "a little corner of reality" "as real as lust, the coins in your pockets, the latent cancer in a woman's beautiful breast, or a shopkeeper's weary tongue."

Philip Lamantia is a kindred spirit; reading him is akin to inviting a close friend along on a road trip. The company is welcome, the conversation invigorating, but occasionally you have to get away from one another for a while. *Bed of Sphinxes, Selected Poems* (City Lights Books, 1997) covers a broad range of material, spanning Lamantia's career from the *Erotic Poems* of 1943–1946 to the uncollected poems of 1985–1992. Considering Lamantia's prolific output, whose singular grip on unabashed, hard-core surrealism has been as aggressively focused & fervent as a "spoon of sudden birds wheeling the rains of Zeus," this is a definite plus. A broad topography such as *Bed of Sphinxes* allows you to see the little changes in the landscape, subtle variations of foliage. The tender lyricism of the early erotic poems were a surprise to me; this is the "unknown Lamantia." But as the poems evolve it is the more familiar & volcanic Lamantia whose surrealist lava seers the page, as in "Poem for André Breton," which ends appropriately with "the latest eruption at Mt. St. Helens." I've often wondered at the seeming incongruity of surrealist influence on Beat writers such as Lamantia, Ted Joans & Bob Kaufman. The Orphic, phantasmagoric imagery of surrealism would tend, I would assume, to discourage rather than recommend it for a poetics of immediacy & rawness. And yet somehow it fits: Lamantia's surrealist engine is an attempt to engross the sublime in the horizontal; consummate a world that seems to go beyond its own existence. It is an attempt to instigate a movement among meanings, create a living utterance of interanimated words.

This doesn't always work. Lamantia's road of excess can sometimes lead to sheer profusion & silly incongruity ("the high-heeled foot garlanded by a silken phallus spectates the forest where the uterine furnishings sink into drawers") rather than a palace of wisdom. But when it does (which is more often the case) the effect is galvanizing.

At last! Somebody has written a book intended to put the pizzazz back into reading. *Creative Reading, What It Is, How to Do It, and Why* (National Council of Teacher's of English, 1997) by Ron Padgett, couldn't have been written at a more critical time, or by a more well-suited author. Padgett's droll, congenial, subversive intelligence brings the material alive; it doesn't really require much creative reading to get through it; it is, as they say, a good read. I drug it along on a train trip to North Dakota thinking if I was trapped in a compartment with it I'd have to read it; it turned out to be a very engaging book & I looked forward to getting back to it every time I was interrupted. The book's premise is simple: to encourage the reader to take a more active role in reading, even if it means gaining the upper hand over the author. Padgett outlines such strategies as "changing single words" (changing one word in a sentence in such a way as to keep the grammar intact but to give the sentence a whole new meaning) "line looping," "edge blurs" & "page skips." "Column confusion" is borrowed from William Burrough's "cut-up" technique, which is more pertinent to compositional strategies than reading, and many of these maneuvers seem a bit gimmicky to me. People enjoy tricks and sideshow curiosities, but I worry that the very people Padgett is trying to reach won't be up to the gamesmanship his creative approach requires; they've grown too used to sitting back & being entertained. In any case, I hope, fervently & creatively, this book is distributed in the nation's high schools *tout de suite,* before the next generation grows up thinking literature is a form of poetry slam.

Diaries are personal affairs, I generally feel squeamish around them. I don't want to know about a somebody's personal habits, who said what to who, somebody's dark confessions. Refreshingly, this is decidedly not the case for *The Diary of James Schuyler,* edited by Nathan Kernan (Black Sparrow, 1997). Schuyler had a sharp eye for observation and many of his entries are simply that: contemplations of the external world rendered with astonishing lucidity, wit, and sensual language. "It is by music that I enter into a musical emotion," observed Merleau-Ponty in *The Visible and the Invisible,* and "it is the thing itself that opens me to the private world of another. . .it is only by the world that I can get outside of myself." It is, in the language of Heidegger, a way of finding oneself among things: *Befindlichkeit.* Schuyler suffered from bouts of severe, incapacitating depression and in 1983 was

diagnosed as having diabetes; yet his entries possess an amazing jauntiness, a facility for externalizing legitimate grievances into occasions of word play and verbal finesse. "When my mother lived to be ninety I thought I might have a shot at it: but it doesn't look that way, no it doesn't. But dying is no big deal. Who knows? Maybe I'm wrong and there is a God and I'll meet darling Fairfield again." Schuyler enjoyed a particular fascination with the weather, gazing frequently out the window and jotting everything down with a painterly eye (the influence, quite possibly, of living with Fairfield Porter). "Everything that is white looking dingy, like this morning sky, and everything that is dark, like the black asphalt shingles, reflecting and lightening itself, as though with an admixture of white or silver paint." The entries are lushly footnoted and provide insightful commentary. Schuyler's diary serves as both a terrific introduction to an important poet (many of the entries became poems) and as a Baedeker to a singular sensibility.

Read Hannah Weiner long enough & you get to feeling language is this stuff floating around you & in you & on you & out of you. "She herself has said," writes Charles Bernstein in his essay "Making Words Visible/ Hannah Weiner," "that she is interested in an electric energy that completely fills the page, transforming it into an impermeable field." I call it lightning thick enough to eat. *We Speak Silent* (Roof Books, 1996) has the feel of a radio play tuned in on a psychedelic transponder whose characters include a polar bear named "paw," Bob Dylan (a.k.a. "boobela") P Inman, Lewis Warsh & Neil Young, to name a few. The language is sprightly & void of artifice. There's a charmingly weird innocence about it, like toes, or rinkypuddlepink. A spirit of absorbed submission to sheer overplus, "a conference on the word humph."

—JOHN OLSON

Adam Cornford, *Decision Forest* (Pantograph Press, Berkeley, 1997)

Adam Cornford, who teaches in the Poetics Program at New College of California in San Francisco, has constructed compelling intersections in his ambitious new book *Decision Forest.* "Decision trees" are binary choice paths brought into play to solve corporate and computing problems. Cornford's *Decision Forest* works through a multitude of such models, each rooted in a different aspect of our late century virtual landscape. The book is constructed between two pillars: an Overture, through which Cornford works the webs and disintegrations of his intellectual and genetic lineage, and a Coda, which, in essay form, explores social paradigms and mental constructs, specifically contrasting those which are vertical and hierarchical (pyramid) and those which are horizontal and organic (tree). Often, Cornford analyzes the architecture of decision through the language of collision.

The poems of *Decision Forest,* undergirded by Cornford's personal history, occur where the emerged dominance of technology slams into ecology at the crossroads of quantum mechanics and science fiction. The work is held together by its mission as a book of conscience and by the strength and range of Cornford's language, voice, and diverse writing styles. The reader is moved, sometimes careened, from the acute tenderness of Cornford's experience of his unborn child in its mother's womb:

> Every night now, she and I curling side by side
> your movements come clearly into focus
>
> against my buttock or my spine
> You swivel and flick, an eye
>
> under the sleeping lid of your mother's belly
> Already, as nerve-grammars widen through-
> out you, branching and
> rebranching their generative lace
>
> (from R.E.M.)

to the harsh staccato bark-voice of the gunman who slaughtered a cafeteria full of people in Texas in 1991:

> Voices are strings of spit. Stick bitch holes nag
> *Go, do, you , we, me.* Flesh bags, coiled hair

Glistening. Shit squeezes out of them, they sag
Squish peach, mouse-guts under slick skirts.

(from Killeen)

These collisions of human extremes, modeled in the sensual explorations of Cornford's language, occur as microcosms of the book's greater contextual polarities where technology, ecology and conscience collide in a science fiction mirror that both warps and reflects the western econotechnic world:

The hell we need was not conjured by a Renaissance
[doctor
draining acrid goblets of hubris and ennui
nor by adolescent girls leaking incandescence under linen
[nightgowns
nor yet by cellar circles of nervous dilettantes in evening
[wear
The Hell we need is invoked by its terrestrial image
its holographic miniature building unfurling like a zygote
of cobras inside a womb walled with facial rictus
wherever misery concentrates so densely that its mass
collapses the spirit into a gravity well like the vortex
left behind by the descending Pequod

(from Mobile Hell)

In other works, especially the long, and central piece: "Millennium: A Topology" Cornford maps, with considerable grace and power, a glistening machine-tautology that not only presents the seemingly inescapable dehumanization to be spawned from unbridled late millennium capitalism, but also models the convergence of what would once have been considered science fiction with an automaton work-world that now seems nearly palpable:

dream themselves energy masters leaning underlit
over vast blueprint table where Plan spreads out pushing
[back
frontiers of spacetime driving the masses along moving
[walkways
down bright ceramic tunnels elevator shafts hydraulic
of work power orchestras hands moving in unison endless
[processing

These works intersect with a poem series: "The Cyborg's Path," sections of which are dispersed throughout the book and whose lines spread, boxed and unanchored, across the page like computer-aided mappings of the decision-making mind. Here, as in "Killeen," Cornford uses language to build demonstrations and models rather than to simply describe. The reader is presented with the graphic patterns of thought and can follow the branches, through grids of choice, to various outcomes.

The considerable varieties of voice, subject, syntax and format, project, like quantum particles, a sense of the multi-locational through *Decision Forest.* The poems array themselves in many directions and assess the onslaught through many lenses. Indeed, the book portrays the complex mental actions, represented in decisions, that ultimately propel the world. These decisions, driven by technology and compelled by the bottom line, have become ever more automatic. While *Decision Forest* is complex, it is not ambiguous. Cornford has traveled beyond the fashionable intersections where etiquette and stop lights keep the rights of way. He has written a book that challenges the reader to choose, in part, by reminding that there are still choices to be made.

—LINDSAY HILL

Transparency & Resistance

·José Emilio Pacheco, *City of Memory and Other Poems*, Translated by Cynthia Steele and David Lauer (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1997), 193 pp.

It's been said before: art is political when produced in relation to a community whose shared patterns of value and conviction are implicitly affirmed or visibly contradicted—or when expression discovers those other patterns which a society fails to recognize.

From his 1964 debut collection, *Los elementos de la noche,* to his most recent *El silencio de la luna*, José Emilio Pacheco has been

consistent in paring down some of the rhetorical excess and mannerisms of poetic *belles lettres* in Mexico, and one of the few poets in his own country and Latin America who, in the wake of the 1960s and 1970s, has continued to address issues such as the 300 years of colonial history in Mexico and its lasting imprint on contemporary social relations, the indignities of life on the margins of the megalopolis and, more broadly, the prevailing historic atrocities of the twentieth century. In its general intention and recurrent concerns, however, Pacheco's is a poetry that too frequently relies on topical positioning and attitude, and not often enough on the possible complexities or refiguring of committed statement. In one of his better-known poems, for example—and repeatedly throughout his 10 volumes of poetry—Pacheco has been known to belabor the indulgent limits of sincerity:

> I want nothing for myself.
> I long only
> for the possible which is impossible:
> a world without victims.
> How to attain this lies beyond my reach;
> it escapes my pettiness, this meager effort
> to dredge our century's sea of blood
> with the tremulous cup of my hand.
>
> ("Fin de siglo")

And yet Pacheco's poetry has been remarkably well-received over the years in Mexico, Latin America and Spain, where he has been honored with countless laurels—a fact, no doubt, that may have more to do with his admirable overall work as a translator, scholar and promoter which has rightly earned him the title of unofficial cultural ambassador. As for the poems themselves, the often blaring simplicity of argument or the facile nature of the moral world that characterizes Pacheco's work always threaten to undermine his entire poetic project. It's no wonder there's been a considerable backlash in the last few years, spearheaded by a handful of his contemporaries. Or more than a dose of skepticism, as reflected by veteran Octavio Paz when in 1979 he wrote that "[Pacheco is a] Doctor Pangloss in reverse, resolved to demonstrate that we live in the worst of all possible worlds."*

* I should quickly add, however, that despite the social unrest experienced in Mexico—particularly since 1994—little if any significant work of political scope has emerged in response to both urban and rural manifestations of discontent. At least in Vallejo's definition of a poetry that would engage the social: "The political receptiveness of the artist is preferably produced, in its superlative authenticity, by creating concerns and a nebulous politics that are far more vast than any questionnaire listing the preoccupations or periodic ideals as to national or universal policy."

Originally published in 1986 and 1989, respectively, *City of Memory* and *I Watch the Earth,* the two separate books gathered in this single City Lights edition, display many of Pacheco's signature motifs. At his best he combines clarity of meditation with direct address, as in the impressive opening poem "Sea-Snail"—about identity and homelessness: that is, the provisional nature of armature and place—together with stylistic allusions to D.H. Lawrence, Rilke, Nezahualcóyotl and Catullus. At worst, as in nearly all of the short poems, the writing is embarrassingly slim. Even when he speaks of disaster ("I Watch the Earth," a book-length meditation on the 1985 earthquake that shook Mexico City and claimed thousands of lives), or when he addresses this "century's sea of blood," the writing itself seems entirely immune to the horrors it describes.

Pacheco is a poet, you would think, who aims to exonerate the guilty conscience, or to affirm the moral piousness, of a (primarily Latin American) intellectual bourgeoisie that, once upon a time, constituted the counterculture. His is a world blind to those sadomasochistic forces of violence by which humankind is determined; a poetry happily unsuspecting of the destruction to which women and men relentlessly delight, hence underlining just how tenuous and fragile is this notion of a "clean, spare style." It's as though Pacheco were truly convinced, as indeed he writes, that:

> Poetry lets me leave myself behind
> and have the experience of another experience.
> Poetry humanizes humanity
> and shows us that
> no one is less than anyone else.

• *The XUL Reader: An Anthology of Argentine Poetry, 1980-1996*, edited by Ernesto Livon Grosman (New York: Roof Books, 1997), 135 pp.

It was precisely this pervading use of alleged transparency which, at the onset of the 1980s, some writers in Latin America sought to oppose. In Argentina, thanks to the perseverance of poet and editor Jorge Santiago Perednik, the magazine XUL emerged as a forum for a considerable range of writers whose ethics was based on "risk and responsibility, separated from the institutionalized poetic [of what was] considered literarily 'good,' which in reality is the security of that which [constitutes] the norm, to forge without restrictions and starting from whatever realm the adequate hows of the poem" (Perednik,

p. xxi). This activity, as represented by XUL, was parallel and in response to Argentina's military dictatorship and its politics of terror begun in 1976, and whose traces (in everyday language and that of the media and State) loomed well after its end in 1983.

Now, thanks to Ernesto Livon Grosman—a contributor to XUL himself—we have a sampling of what became, in his words, a "means of cultural resistance [which] had less to do with heroics than with creative and intellectual survival."

> Poetry constituted a practice which—because of its independence with respect to commercial publishing houses and because of its more limited circulation in comparison with the novel and essay—received less attention on the part of the censors.*

In XUL, problems of representation, the extended definitions of historical content and experimentation at linguistic and visual levels became synonymous with a more open sense of oppositional praxis and negation. Likewise, this significant shift of focus also lead to a redefinition of the hitherto operative models for writerly production in a way that bears certain resemblances to the literary and historical revisionism undertaken during those years by language-oriented writers in North America. Not unlike the latter's repositioning of Gertrude Stein and Louis Zukofsky, in Argentina writers like Oliverio Girondo and poet-artist Xul Solar (whose name inspired that of the magazine) were given a more crucial status than heretofore ascribed.**

In addition to the two pointed introductions by Grossman and Perednik, the *Reader* is divided into three sections: an initial nod to certain predecessors, like those mentioned above, as well as to the

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*The opposite, incidentally, has been true of contemporary Mexico and its monolithic, omnipresent State wherein cultural expressions have been largely regulated by either a privileged social elite, or by a generous, albeit complacent official apparatus of grants and stipends which has dulled most writers of their potential for aesthetic critique and verbal innovation. Hence virtually no significant avant-garde or formally intrepid work appears in any consistent way. One only wonders what effects, if any, the present process of democratization in Mexico will have on future arts and writing.

** In his essay included in this collection Jorge Santiago Perednik raises some pertinent questions regarding "the new" and "the old"—terms which have accompanied and haunted the grammar of the avant-garde since its inception and subsequently in urgent need of reframing, as recently echoed in a marvelously-articulate and highly-recommended leaflet by Steve Evans entitled *The Dynamics of Literary Change* (Providence: The Impercipient Lecture Series, vol. 1, no. 1, February 1997), the first in a series of lengthy essays and prose works on the state of the art launched by its author and poet Jennifer Moxley. For information: 61 East Manning Street, Providence, Rhode Island, 02906-4008.

opening stanzas of the nineteenth-century national classic *Martín Fierro* by José Hernández; the poems themselves, and a magnificent selection of editorials which constitute some of the most powerful writing in the collection—especially Roberto Cignoni's "Letter to the President," an intricate 8-page tirade whose sheer prophetic breath and turns of image upon image of sustained negation are the fruit of an authentic visceral engagement with the then-current state of affairs.

As for the work, Arturo Carrera undertakes a jagged investigation into the meanings of paternity and paternalism. Néstor Perlongher's highly-disturbing "Madame Shocklender" and Jorge Santiago Perednik's "The Shock of the Lenders" both explore the imaginative and psychological edges of an infamous case of parenticide in Argentina at the onset of the 1980s; and Luis Thonis forges an equational lyricism derived from mythic and literary tropes in his poem "Sophia." Other poets of note include Andrea Gagliardi ("Psyche"), Ernesto Livon Grosman ("The Golfer's Discourse") and Laura Klein ("Like a madwoman sewing. . ."). In addition to the community of Argentine contemporaries that the magazine clearly forged throughout its sixteen years of existence, XUL also published material—not included in this *Reader*—by Oswald de Andrade, Roland Barthes, Jorge Luis Borges, Augusto and Haroldo de Campos, Marcel Duchamp, Pier Paolo Passolini, George Perec, Raymond Queneau and Phillip Sollers.

The XUL Reader is a gathering of extremely dense, manifold and often beautifully-sounded work in the original, characterized by untamable syntax, neologism, ellipsis, disobedient orthography and other concrete signs of violence. [Credit should be given here to translators Jorge Guitart, Kathryn A. Kopple, G.J. Racz, Graciela Sidoli and Molly Weigel, and I hope some of their labors will eventually go on to form single English-language editions of various XUL-associated authors.] A testimony to a specific time and place, *The Xul Reader* also bears witness to a body of work whose complexity was born of a genuine resolve to keep from

> . . .falling into silence
> by ineffable carelessness or history
>
> (Laura Klein, "Like a madwoman sewing. . .")

• Jayne Cortez, *Somewhere in Advance of Nowhere* (New York & London: High Risk Books, 1996), 122 pp.

In-your-face politics meets jazz-poetry combustion in the work of Jayne Cortez. Though the author of ten books of poems and a performer on

eight recordings of poetry with music, my only contact with this compelling artist until now had been through occasional magazine publications. With *Somewhere in Advance of Nowhere,* Jayne Cortez pitches into the self-righteous or innocent images readers may have of themselves, free of belligerence but steaming nonetheless with nasty rhythmic articulation or rhapsodic flushes that swerve into tapped flutter and terse dive.

Never detached, her tonal range can go from brassy squawk to delicate echo, swamping down again to flitter in on a particular line or beat, based on a type of extreme image-making whereby visual ideas are exponentially generated into overall statements, as in:

> Whatever frightens
> drunk crickets in dead reefer of your lungs
> whatever fascinates alcoholic termites
> on wooden tooth in your melancholy pimp mouth
> whatever it is
> the festival will start with
> a twirling umbrella of rayon panties
> a dark queendom of yawning vaginas
> a urinating ear of hot asphalt words
> that you can eat
> in spanish fly of your french kiss. . .
>
> ("Whatever Frightens")

. . .or when rendering the immediate effect of a subject engaged in her imaginative written verve, as in:

> . . .Say it
> because everything is like an incursion
> flesh smoking flesh in
> hemp field of
> a fifty minute breakdown
> time sodomizing time
> in circular tunnel of asphalt & ashes
> space revolting against space
> in roar of an artillery salvo fuck
>
> ("Say It")

Somewhere in Advance of Nowhere is informed by the artistic energy and presence of figures as diverse in time and space as Aimé Césaire, Big Mama Thorton, Ed Blackwell, Ana Mendieta, Sun Ra, and—except for what I gather to be a romanticized notion of post-Revolutionary race

relations—Cuba's rich African-American cultural legacies, including artist-intellectuals Nicolás Guillén and Wifredo Lam, or the myriad syncretisms of diaspora as manifest on that island, and elsewhere in the Caribbean and Brazil.

Cortez' writing is not all on the same level in the interplay of novel breath-turn and intensity, but there are a handful of pieces in addition to the ones quoted above—the thoughtfully-orchestrated "She Got He Got," the incantational force of "I Have Been Searching (Rwanda Conflict)" and the spirally smoke of the smoldering self in "Now I Dig Up Patinas"—that have the power of an embodied mind and voice in low-down siren-song alerting us to the individual or collective signs of imminent crash and possible rescue.

—ROBERTO TEJADA

Are You Experienced?
Susan Bee, *Talespin*, Granary Books, NYC, 1995, 40 copies, o.p.
Susan Bee and Charles Bernstein, *Little Orphan Anagram*, Granary Books, NYC, 1997, 35 copies, still in print, $1500 each.

I went to the Garden of Love,
And saw what I never had seen:
A Chapel was built in the midst,
Where I used to play on the green.

And the gates of this Chapel were shut,
And "Thou shalt not" writ over the door;
So I turn'd to the Garden of Love
That so many sweet flowers bore;

And I saw it was filled with graves,
And tomb-stones where flowers should be;

> And Priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,
> And binding with briars my joys & desires.
> —William Blake, "The Garden of Love," *Songs of Experience*

I recently received a phone call from a mother of a one-year old girl asking for a curious favor. It seemed that the child, eager to indulge in the wonders of language, had ripped through all of the books for children her age in the local Barnes & Noble. This particular kid loved the *sound* of language; rhymes in particular lulled her into a trance-state to which she was becoming addicted. In a panic, her mother called me and asked me to compose some simple formal rhymes to slake the child's thirst.

The image of a child in a relative state of innocence, barely able to maintain a vocabulary, yet reveling in the sound of language detached from meaning brought to mind Wittgenstein's struggles with language, meaning, sound and *experience*:

> "I can speak of 'experiencing' a sentence. "I am not merely saying this, I mean something by it." . . . Understanding a sentence is more akin to understanding a piece of music than one might think. . . ."
>
> (*Philosophical Grammar*, p. 41)

At what temporal and conceptual juncture do our "Songs of Innocence" become "Songs of Experience?" Susan Bee and Charles Bernstein take up these large questions in their new collaboration, *Little Orphan Anagram* (Granary Books, 1997). The pages of this children's book gone astray are mixed with light and shadow, sweetness and violence, whimsy and pain; in a way, it's *Alice In Wonderland* meeting "The Raven."

The title page alone bespeaks of the compound experience that awaits the reader: there are bright colors and polka dots sharing the page with an image of a little girl shedding a tear; this trip is not going to be entirely pleasant. The next page restates this theme: we are shown a glorious image of country life—a rustic farmhouse, lush green trees and busy beehives all captioned by a text that begins "It was on summer's day / Found myself alone and gray." The book proceeds this way throughout: light children's "rimes" are illustrated by images of ghouls, gargoyles, and insects. Sweet colored patterns of numbers and letters are tempered with screaming warnings from overbearing mothers. Angel-faced children floating about in pajamas are accompanied by lines like "Burns all over but no pain." And, three-quarters of the way through the book, children disappear entirely and the problems of

misogyny are taken up: women are sliced, diced, weighed, measured, and scopophiliacly viewed by menacing male gazes. The book's final pages end on a similar note of doom: violent black jagged fallopian tubelike shapes are dolefully captioned by a text that begins "Yes, forty dents, forty dents & not a minute more. . ."

All of this would be quite gloomy if not for the tension created between the dark content of the book and the buoyant mastery of the authors in their respective crafts. Rarely has a collaboration been so seamlessly melded and interwoven. One can hardly image Bee's images existing without Bernstein's texts and vice versa. It's a collaboration from the heart, from the family; it's two parents observing the transformation of their children from states of innocence to realms of experience and at the same time observing the changes in themselves as a result of the child rearing experience. Just as Blake's songs are parables for all times of life, Bee and Bernstein, through the medium of the "children's book," grapple with the transformative experiences that never seem to resolve themselves over the course of one's lifetime.

To underscore the perfection of this current collaboration, one must look at Bee's previous book, *Talespin* (Granary Books, 1995). Here, we are presented with a book that looks very similar to *Little Orphan Anagram*: it's the same size and at first glance, even the imagery looks identical. However, upon closer inspection, *Talespin* reveals itself to be something quite different: it's a thing of beauty and innocence. The images comprising each plate are appropriated from various Victorian sources ranging from antique children's books, drawing manuals, and 19th-century magazines. All the pages are lusciously and laboriously painted (as with *Little Orphan Anagram*, Bee actually spent over a year hand-painting the entire edition). Symbolist and Surrealistic imagery abounds: there are dreamy images of two women dressed in Victorian garb duking it out underwater, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*-like characters probe the depths of the ocean in a hot air balloon, and sexy mermaids embrace in loving caresses. It's dreamy, it's sunny, it's happy—it's light. There are children in this book as well—they're all smiling, playing, and swinging from trees. Even the "violent" scenes have a fantastic whimsy about them; it's a an old-fashioned book, a bit of nostalgia for the sunshiny days of yesteryear. Fragments of appropriated text add to the breezy pleasures of this book: poems by Christina Rosetti, nursery rhymes, instructions on how to draw, and bits of *Alice in Wonderland* gently skip across the pages. A love of playful language and formal beauty set the stage for *Talespin*, which perhaps is Bee's own "Songs of Innocence."

However, something quite different happens in *Little Orphan*

Anagram. The first clues are visual: the field is deeper, darker, and stronger than the previous book. We encounter an aggression and angularity that was hitherto absent. The color is cleaner and stronger, the brushstrokes are more sure of themselves, and every mark seems to be executed with a firm sense of purpose. This time around, Bee's image choices are more focused and rigorous; even the compositions seem more geometric, more severe. Judging by the artist's leaps made from *Talespin*, the reader will draw the conclusion that the *book* is Bee's medium—she's really at her best here, bringing beauty, strength and intelligence to each page she lovingly paints. It's rare to see a painter feeling so comfortable and assured within the confines of the book format.

—KENNETH GOLDSMITH

Stuttering Britain: Notes on Andrew Duncan and cris cheek and Sound & Language

Britain's most provocative poetry critic is Andrew Duncan, now sole editor of the journal *Angel Exhaust* and author of the revisionist history of recent British poetries offered in its pages. Duncan has the splenetic energy of Wyndham Lewis, a fondness for citing Adorno and Deleuze, and an aesthetic impossibly described as socialist realist, which doesn't prevent him from publishing some of the best poetry and prose about poetry now being written in Britain and Ireland. Provocation of the sort he delights in is mostly a male sport, and in his terse prose free of academic jargon and gratuitous subtlety Duncan's been fearless in taking on avant-garde shibboleths and mainstream stupidities both, challenging the critical silences which help keep the most interesting British poetry confined in sullen corners of knowing resignation. He seems to play few favorites: more than a few were pissed off by his assault on Bob Cobbing's Writers Forum, others left to shake their swollen heads at his sketch of the networks and values of a "Cambridge School."

In the former of these polemics he called Cobbing's sound poetry "the world's ugliest noise" and continued under the sign of Adornean high modernism to detail what he takes to be the limitations and pretensions of a specific variety of exploratory poetry and the culture grown up around it. This work is cultish, he wrote, self-defeating and self-isolating, grandiose and misguided in its political ambitions and rationales, burdened simultaneously by academic theory, discredited teleologies of the "avant-garde," and "infantile" yearnings, condescending to the needs of an (ignored) audience and every bit a part of bourgeois society in its instrumentalized discourses of "procedures" and "practices" as well as in its participation in government handouts. What's fascinating about all of this is that it's written from a position professing solidarity with the work of specific "experimental" or "alternative" poets such as Tom Raworth, Allen Fisher, and Maggie O'Sullivan. Among Americans Duncan admires Michael Palmer's poetry but not most "language poetry." For an outsider like me, this is all intensely amusing and, moreover, *useful*—though not so much for its ability to show the fly the way out of the fly bottle as for its noisy insistence on the rights of the fly to exhaust itself in exasperated and abstracted buzzing. Ultimately, the polemic, which has points valid enough to be taken seriously, founders in its circumscription of the domain of the "human," which here looks a little too much like a genteel drawing room, the body kept out of sight behind the talking heads, no one allowed to make an ugly face or babble any cacophonous or ecstatic nonsense. (There's also a problem with a proposition suggesting that specific avant-garde practices are "games" withholding their rules, but I won't go into that here.) Whole terrains of poetry which remain resources especially for those thinking about performance and performance writing are written off because Duncan has come to the realization that, here as everywhere else much of the writing just isn't all that interesting. What a surprise.

For brilliant readings of the best of recent British poetry, hunt for the prose of Andrew Crozier, J. H. Prynne, Anthony Mellors, John Wilkinson, and others; for more careful diagnosis and polemic articulated from recognizable sites look for the essays of Drew Milne, Allen Fisher, Robert Sheppard and Peter Middleton, and beyond them to the essays collected by Denise Riley in *Poets on Writing*, to name but a few; but if you want a glimpse of a powerful jackhammer at work tearing down blissfully impervious and in some cases hollow structures, turn first to Duncan. It's not a matter of agreeing with particular aesthetic judgments or political propositions—Duncan's "socialist realism" can be laughable, as I think he knows—it's the passion of a prose which never forgets that "Each one of 56 million people in the UK is

approximately as complicated as I am." That sentence almost redeems him.

Duncan is part of a generation born in the '50s and including poets such as John Seed, Geraldine Monk, Frank Kuppner, Rod Mengham, Tony Lopez, David Dabydeen, Jean Binta Breeze, and cris cheek. This is the generation of poets that felt most powerfully—had to find their way as emerging poets during—the Thatcherite clampdown, though it's not as if respected elders (Prynne and Raworth, Crozier and Grace Lake, Allen Fisher and Roy Fisher, etc.) exactly flourished in that era, when hope was the most laughable four-letter word and "society" subject to the choking engines of erasure. Duncan lists the key issues confronting his generation as follows:

> Key dates might be 1974, the shifting but Europe-wide *riflusso* and collapse of Counter-Cultural dreams and withdrawal into the armed despairing autonomy of 'personal politics'; 1977, the merely acoustic revolution of Punk; the election of Thatcher and the 'engineered recession' of 1979-81; indeterminately, around 1982, the abandon[ment] of Punk for something altogether suaver and more extended. . . . In the long run, disco music was more important than punk; both relied on automatic, technology-driven processes in which the personality of the artist was only a button. The stylistic issues would include: the reception of popular culture; beauty versus punk, or contestation of the surface; a coherent, human voice versus multiple impersonal voices uttering what the self rejects; flows of knowledge of diverse type about human behavior; the critique of language and of existing forms of beauty and sentiment; speeding up the information flow by challenging, contesting, defamiliarizing fixed knowledge; the problem of offering any account of personal or social experience in the enfilade of this negative-inversion; the lure of advertising and narcissism; the capture of images and textures in a kind of optical greed; the keeping house of cultural exile, underground or heirs-apparent; a fear of the didactic while also admiring the didactic above all else.

Duncan notes but is not especially concerned by the fact that many of the "basic stylistic features" defining the work of this generation were (and are) readily available in work published in the sixties by Tom Raworth, Roy Fisher, and others. He's certainly right to reject the myths of originality and "progress" still inscribed in some "avant-garde" discourses, and I suppose he's basically right about what was available

in Raworth and elsewhere in 1965, though such blanket assertion will not do justice even to the diversity of Raworth's poetry as he moved from *The Big Green Day* (1968) to *Ace* (1974) and doesn't begin to account for noteworthy differences between what, say, O'Sullivan and Lopez, or Wilkinson and Sheppard have taken from predecessors. Montage, disjunction, and so forth—these are vague terms for generalized procedures unless we pay sufficient attention to particulars, to the dispersed contents and the grist of idiom in actual poems.

What *does* concern Duncan is the fact that, though all of these poets are "moving into middle age," their work is only just recently beginning to be published: "A fracture struck English 'underground' poetry in the mid-'70s, and younger poets had great difficulty getting published after that. This has never really let up." But publishing books doesn't sum up what all of these poets have been about, by choice or otherwise, and indeed it might well be argued that what seems to be a bias against performance prevents Duncan from understanding ways in which writers might begin to address the problems of audience long attendant upon experimental poetries by moving beyond the culture of the book.

Maybe the problems besetting the British avant-garde are beginning to let up now, what with recent anthologies such as *Conductors of Chaos* and the possibilities represented by the meltdown in the last election. It's tempting for Americans to compare the fate of American "experimental" writers of this same generation with their British counterparts, but while such a comparison is potentially enlightening it might be more useful to determine what changes the recent crisis in British poetry has brought about. Here I think of cris cheek, a writer mentioned in Duncan's 1995 essay as someone whose "work is impossible to come by." It's not as if cheek hasn't been publishing—perhaps the most extensive collection of earlier work is *a present* (1980)—but good luck finding these publications. Even if you can find *a present,* which in some ways is perhaps the closest thing to first-wave language poetry produced in Britain, you might find it, as I do in part and as Duncan surely would, full of fragments and scratches and blips and reflecting nervous exhaustion and punk refusal more than something of lasting value—though the book's production *as book* bears careful consideration in a way that some of its specific contents do not. Other books, such as *mud* (1984), I'm not sure even cheek still has around. Some of this work has secured slim but valuable commentary in essays by Ken Edwards and Middleton in Robert Sheppard's *Pages* and as part of the subject matter for Allen Fisher's manifesto-essay "Necessary Business" (Prynne and Eric Mottram are the other occa-

sions there). But cheek's importance in the long run might have less to do with *what* he was publishing early on than with *how* he views the act of publishing—not as the most important or even the primary among his activities but instead as a "versioning" of writing seeking a deployment and engagement in as many tactically chosen sites as possible. And cheek's own work as published writer and as performer must also be set beside his work as the editor of his anthologies of performance writing and hybrid texts, *Language aLive,* and in the books and CDs he produces for Sound & Language.

In days of yore and gore I suppose that cheek's many pursuits while working as a dancer, musician, teacher, printer, and poet, producing graphic and photographic works and video fictions, editing and curating and so on, would have earned him the label "renaissance man" (sic). Partly an autodidact, apprentice of sorts to Eric Mottram and Cobbing during the so-called British Poetry Revival, early interlocutor of "language poetry" (you can find him in Bernstein's *Content's Dream),* advocate and agent of dialogue on several listservs where his pixel-signature "love and love" is virtually familiar—these are part of the enterprise which suggest a Castiglione. But in this era of organized as well as unofficial indifference, within a history like that sketched by Duncan, it' s not the self-cultivation of the renaissance man we need but the explosiveness and tactical ingenuity of the "run-amok person" looking to disseminate intelligence, imagination, and critique in all available and emerging social spaces. Again and again cheek has searched out the ways and means to situate a writing extraordinarily conscious of the locations and conditions of its articulation, production, and reception in and against and between the institutions of said indifference.

I'm thinking partly of events he's curated such as *The Night Of The Living Tongues,* which brought together poets, performance artists, musicians, experimental filmmakers, and even a trick cyclist or two in a kind of post-dada-cabaret, the event's title one indication of just how removed such an event might be from all that we typically associate with poetry readings in their "regular" settings, the point being to create cross artform audiences and generate cross artform perception. Or he's sitting behind a computer in a club in London called "The End" ("E" backwards) improvising writing on a Mac with a video camera pointed at it and a video mix that allows him to scan text in 200 point into film-based imagery projected on the screens and walls of the club. Writing amid dancing, ongoing bass rumble and performance work. In some of cheek's solo performances he's merging dance with sound effects and music from Madagascar and elsewhere in an effort to bring out the expressive possibilities and resistances of the text he is

articulating. To see and hear him perform a text like "Stranger" is another matter from playing it on his CD *Skin upon Skin,* and another matter still from reading the text as I sample it below; cheek is exemplary in the attention he pays to the performative possibilities of each setting for his work. Thirty minutes recently witnessed in New Hampshire made concrete for me the testimony of Middleton and others about the lithe presence, the big man with the moves of a dancer, the hand-held speakers carrying Madagascar and what else, the dramatic technologies. Manic but also curiously vulnerable, I thought, this practiced confession which moves so subtly from an ironized melodrama and travelogue to the beauty and strangeness of the self as other in time's continuum, these precise syllables and rhythms of personal and cultural alienation and desire. (More of the text below.)

If the avant-gardes want an audience, if they want to be working at endeavors that build community and have at least some small potential for shaping a few corners of the present, they can't afford *not* to pursue and exploit all available "points of engagement," whether that means producing works within or aimed at popular media and its diverse artforms, or seeing what can be done to make of academies institutions of genuine openness and exploration where the curious have at least the opportunity to test and extend the limits of reigning disciplinary practices. We might even have to kill the monster "modern poetry" to get anything done. "It's about time," Ed Dorn said to me once upon hearing such a proposition, and the reality is that we have to do so again and again. Cheek's endeavors belong in an ongoing tradition—Fluxus, the Destruction in Art Symposium—but so what? Skeptics will note that their impact tend to be most forceful among self-selected youth cultures—but so what? (The old folks are mostly at home.) At a moment in which social spaces for poetry in the United States seem unusually limited—beyond the bop braggadocio of versions of a counter-cultural past at the slam and the mostly jammed academic circuits alternative venues are sputtering out—they suggest possibilities. At the very least we have to kill the cultishness and pretension that has grown up around even avant-garde poetries, and the range of cheek's enthusiasms and activities are instructive in this regard. The search for audiences that drives even such a cheesy nostalgia as that associated with the American New Formalists—with their watered-down "traditional" forms, soporific sonnets and neo-augustan No-Doze, suburban banalities of diction and subjectivity and so on—cannot be easily discounted. Cheek's answer is to engage the popular as material practice and site of cultural exchange rather than by alluding to some Beach Boys tune or writing a poetry altogether "accessible" in its forms and sentiments but stuck in the same old book.

Or that's one of the answers, for the book cannot be ignored. So as the editor of *Language aLive* cheek publishes texts that "present writing *as performance in itself* as well as *for performance*—of a pertinence for the performer-writer and the performer-reader." Among the writers in the first two collections are Fiona Templeton, the ensemble Forced Entertainment, Brian Catling, Caroline Bergvall, and Steve Benson. "Speak, Bitterness," the Forced Entertainment text (from an installation), looks at first glance like somebody's FBI file, heavy with darkly blotted out passages and produced in the dated typeface of a manual typewriter. We see quickly that the blotting-out is crucial to the text, its prosody almost, as it introduces an editorial function into the compulsive confessionalism of the text's "authors," whose post-punk ethos can contain both "We waited until Paul was completely drunk and then beat the fuck out of him" and "We agreed with Albert Einstein the scientific genius." Low-tech manipulated to great effect, as on the CDs of The Mountain Goats. Circled phrases with lines drawn between them in a representation and enactment of editorial process link Seattle and My Lai; black marks underscore the muggy spasms of an abject crew while also emerging as counterpoint for them, as for instance on one page where the only readable type, surrounded by blacked-out lines, is "cry-for-help."

Benson's texts (he wore headphones and improvised while playing passages selected from Eudora Welty and others reading on books-on-tape) are more Steinian in spirit:

> The difference crushes what is old, and you suppose that someone who has what you think always had what he was pulling.
>
> The weeds were pulled out, and the big, fat, religious figure was undeceived suddenly.

Reading that first one, I'm so caught up in its (semantic) violation of what its grammar seems to be promising ("thinking" as the last word instead of "pulling") that it takes a minute to ask how it is possible for someone to "have" what you think—the sentence does not say "to have what you think he has." And what exactly is this "difference," and how do we connect the two independent clauses except in a time-of-reading? In Caroline Bergvall's erotics, it's not the sentence but the page—its layout as we "turn it" as well as the semantic and graphic potential of))))))) and ,,,,,,, and <<<<<<<< >>>>>>>> which are among the procedures that come into play. Not just typography, or white spaces, or multiple fonts, much less the "meaning" or the "sound" of

words, but the book itself as an instrument of meaning with conventions to be extended as well as questioned. As J. H. Prynne once wrote in another context, speaking against Saussure and on behalf of sound-values in poetry, "anything that *can* count toward meaning *may* do so."

Among the books Sound & Language has produced are Bergvall's *Éclat,* Miles Champion's *Sore Models,* Ira Lightman's *Loving Phase/ Transit Ions,* and Allen Fisher's *Civic Crime,* this last with a cover by Fisher ("Levitation"). Like some of his poems, Fisher's cover seems to be "about" frames and what they contain, about violence and dreams of "levitation" or transcendence within articulated grids which are shown to be arbitrary and rigorous both, their boundaries at issue but their ability to make spectral figures show up clear as well. On the front a muscular male figure squeezes a duck by the neck; on the rear an infantile male and a woman with arched back and thrusting breasts vault a fence or balance beam. *Civic Crime* extends Fisher's ongoing sequence *Gravity as a consequence of shape* with its use of quasi-Blakean types or "characters" (the Burglar, the Engineer, the Artist, even the Bikeboy) speaking discourses contending for focus and with one another within the omnipresent "City"—capitalism's center in London—where "Oligopolistic behavior/ varied from collusion to almost/ perfect competition." Near the beginning of the book's first poem we find:

> The Informer's report confirms
>
> they are metallic balls of
> crystalline liquids sandwiched
> in saliva honeycombs and
> dynamically disordered into droplets
> disturb the gavel.
> Oh what a wonderful world.
>
> Tries to stop it and cannot.
> The variety of their phase behavior
> encourages a focus deception
>
> His long range spatial ordering
> fantasizes a language progression
> from colloidal fluids to crystals

One of the poem's concerns, it seems, is linking a high-modernist-like cult of crystalline finish with misogynist fantasy, though this is to isolate but one of the poem's social referents. The Informer's report is

scrutinized in the book's first poem by the Burglar who can't ignore "screams and riot outside" while also dealing with the Mathematician and Engineer; the Burglar must confront "The breakdown problem/ of established intellectual frameworks" ongoing in the City where "Desire and greed are matched" and "Everybody is very tired/Earning a fortune." The book is very much late eighties but the reach of *Gravity* in its use of narrative and multiple discourses make for a project with a continuing importance to the "post-modern condition(s)" which I can only hint at here. Fisher is perhaps the most substantial–and maybe also the oldest–of the writers cheek has published to date. Sound & Language has supported other projects of less interest to me–the Fiona Wright cut-ups in *Language aLive* seem slight, some of the Brian Catling poems produced there inert, not up to his marvelous "The Stumbling Block Its Index." "It takes a river of shit to float a few boats" is a famous Poundian aphorism, but the percentage of hits as opposed to misses in cheek's publishing activities is remarkably high.

Along with his CD *Skin upon Skin,* some of cheek's poetry is available from Sound & Language in the little book *Stranger.* The version of the poem there is different from the one in Iain Sinclair's recent Picador anthology *Conductors of Chaos,* reflecting different prosodies. I quote from the anthology:

Silhouetting figures form the Remnants of a Patchwork sail
To animate a mutant Life or surf a fraying seam.
A six-toed shade which torches paraffin with Sentiment to strike
Hard for a tiny far off Ditch of land.

Clutching, with bony fingers, to a Sweating Plane.
For fears of truth Exhausted clouds. The Bones of wishful
Social paths Washed out to sea.
A rendering, of Roots up in the air with spray
To paint mistaken Identity.

Come fee dot dash hot. Is House a discarded fruit?
A tendered verge? Where welcome is unwelcome Hit
As tenant hearing tenant Cry.
And meaning Tilts from comprehension to aggression
As if to Emphasize or frame
Variegated Diversions of Interpretation.

Forgetting–fleece–as in Unguarded
Crack

—Activity the Lot of it. A body politic
Of bubbles Waking out of Flattening dreams.

To fish for and barter fantasies.
Blend votes with Printed Facing
Ashen through oncoming headlights
Reflecting Nightgown's Blooming in the driver's eyes
A game of dash concerning death. An edge
Littered profusely with Bleached Shells
And tiny bones Mounded into Fetishes.

Inarticulate and ill at ease Fires in the Valley
Twisted 'up against the wall' Cliches
Gun holding an Urge to piss home all Advantage
Prized as turns of phrase.

An overwhelming profusion, splintering
Sticks between Tending
A metaphor for teeth.

Through an open Rusting.

One of the things that strikes me about this writing, which I excerpt from near the beginning of a longish poem, is how often its rhythms slide into iambics while its phrases and sentences mime a poised balancing suggesting their status as "silhouetting figures" set against the cultural capital of verse traditions emanating from the renaissance and beyond. Dense sound-structures, even rhyme (sea/Identity) emerge—the more radically enjambed Sound & Language version offers different effects. Ken Edwards has speculated about cheek's idiosyncratic capitalization "recalling past spells of English literature" but in this text especially the entanglement of British identities in the fantasies and real violence of colonial adventure are remembered, indeed construct the individual and social body. The poem tours distant settings ("Nigeria/Korea/Somalia/Burma/Madagascar") but there is also a sense in which the "tiny far off Ditch of land" is home and England, both nearly indecipherable and subject mostly to "Foul airs." Discarded fetishes, collapsed paradigms, the mutant body—the poem in moments sober and frenzied summons as in an incantation the agony and ecstasy of the tearing up of roots, of identities always mistaken. "Rendering" is representing and also giving, as one sense of the "tendered" below will remember, but it also sounds the violence of "rend." Pound's Homer is perhaps within cheek's field of vision

when, later in the poem, we find "Alert to where the seas go 'sssssssssssaaaaaaaaaaaa'./Blood unraveling definitions of destination/ Into continuous discontinuities of Presence?" The unraveling pertains not just to self and social body but finally also to the self-reflexive action of the verse—"Now—is poetry then/a process of arresting/or of Moving?" Mostly of moving, I think the answer is, even if in this poem "A cadence out of business is revisited" and at times "at will inverted" and the "font of poisons" contained in solidarity and belief, in the "clutches" of nostalgic sentiment, is never altogether escaped. The poem would will a forgetting moving towards transcendence without ever being able to finish *that* sentence—the noun phrase ("A game of dash concerning death") being its fundamental building block. As a result, the ending of this poem full of wonders (even the Gulf War) will perhaps seem forced too suddenly into sentiment ("Fly away/glow/ stranger"). But the fleeceless journeying of the creep-stranger talking at the sky is up to that point a marvelous ride, cheek's access to a range of expression uncommon in cynical-ironic British poetries something to behold. An accessible hyper-expressionism meets the clarity and sophistication of Allen Fisher on grounds in sight of popular traditions; embodied noises move seeking the creases among "Competitive ideals of Paradise." Anything is possible but who's brought the cash? cheek asks. One wonders what Andrew Duncan will make of it.

* * *

All citations from Andrew Duncan are from his essays and reviews published in *Angel Exhaust,* which can be had at 27 Sturton Street, Cambridge CB 1 2QG, England; see also http://angel-exhaust.offworld .co.uk. Publications by cris cheek and Sound & Language can be had at Sound & Language, 85 Suffolk Road South, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR33 OAS, England; orders available also via cris @slang.demon.uk

—KEITH TUMA

Contributor Notes

CHARLES BERNSTEIN's *Republic of Reality* (Poems 1975-1995) is forthcoming from Sun & Moon. KASUYA EIICHI is commonly considered Japan's finest prose poet. His most well-known collection is *The Structure of the World* (Sekai no Kōzō). D.W. WRIGHT's poetry and translations have recently appeared in *Prairie Schooner, Exquisite Corpse,* and *Gui* (Japan). DAN FEATHERSTON is starting a new magazine of poetry and poetics, *Letter.* He has recently appeared in *Chain, First Intensity, Parnassus* and *Response.* ROSS GAY is in the M.F.A. program at Sarah Lawrence College. CLAYTON ESHLEMAN's *From Scratch* will be published by Black Sparrow Press in 1998. BARBARA GUEST's most recent publication is *Quill, Solitary Apparition* (Post-Apollo Press); later this year Sun & Moon will bring out her *The Confetti Trees: Motion Picture Stories.* LINDSAY HILL is the author of *Kill Series* (Arundel Press, 1991) and the poetry manuscript "NdjenFerno." BENJAMIN HOLLANDER's *The Book of Who Are Was* was recently issued by Sun & Moon. ANSELM HOLLO is an Associate Professor in the Writing & Poetics MFA Program at The Naropa Institute; his latest books of poems are *Corvus* (Coffee House Press, 1995) and *Ahoe* (Smokeproof Press, 1997). TAJ JACKSON lives in New York City. KEVIN KING teaches English as a Second Language at Brandeis University; he has recently published in *The Plains Review* and *Parnassus.* JOHN LATTA has recently been published in *American Letters & Commentary, Lingo, Exquisite Corpse, Iowa Review,* and *Gettysburg Review.* TIMOTHY LIU's new book of poems, *Say Goodnight,* is forthcoming from Copper Canyon Press in 1998. JOHN OLSON's chapbook, *Swarm of Edges* (bec press) appeared in 1996; his poems have recently been published in *First Intensity and Talisman.* JENNY PENBERTHY's edition of Lorine Niedecker's *Collected Poems* will soon be published by University of California Press. ADRIENNE RICH's most recent books are *What Is Found There: Notebooks on Poetry and Politics* and *Dark Fields of the Republic: Poems 1991-1995.* JEROME ROTHENBERG's most recent collection of poems is *Seedings* (New Directions, 1996); he is currently living in Paris. RICHARD SIEBURTH's

Selected Writings of Gerard de Nerval is due out next year from Penguin Classics. MARWAN was born in Damascus, Syria, in 1934; he has lived in Berlin since 1957. He is Professor of Painting at the Fine Arts Institute in Berlin. His work is represented in many of the major European museums. The Egyptian poet ADONIS lives in Paris; a long poem of his on Paris appeared in *Sulfur* #39. GUSTAF SOBIN's *Towards the Blanched Alphabets,* a new collection of poems, will be published by Talisman House next spring. Recent art writing by ROBERTO TEJADA include the catalog essays to *Horace Bristol: All Things* (Gallery of Contemporary Photography, Santa Monica, 1997), *Melanie Smith* (British Council, Mexico City, 1997) and *Inauthentic: Made in Mexico* (Expoarte, Guadalajara, 1997). PAUL VIOLI's *Fracas* is due from Hanging Loose Press in 1998. ALLEN S. WEISS's "Zürn's Doll" is an excerpt from his forthcoming *The Aphoristic Theater,* a work of "theoretic fiction." MARJORIE WELISH's essay, "The Art of Being Sparse, Porous, Scattered," is collected in *Writing the Images After Roland Barthes* (The University of Pennsylvania Press). DAVID ZAUHAR is writing a dissertation on "tradition" as a trope in literary and cultural criticism at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

*

NOTE: weekly it seems we hear at *Sulfur* that we only accept solicited manuscript material for the magazine. The fact is: we have not solicited for a number of years; unsolicited poetry and prose appear in every issue of the magazine.

From A . . .

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. . . To Zanzotto

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ANDREA ZANZOTTO

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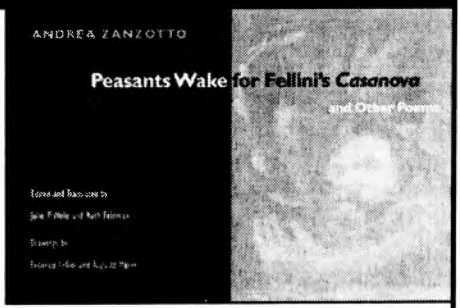

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